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TOP SPIN

Who's Who, What's What, and Why

SPIN did have a concept behind it, though some of you who have followed the magazine closely might find that hard to believe. There was a sort of design in mind, formed in naïveté more than anything. Naïveté is the secret ingredient of SPIN. This is an intelligent magazine, streetwise, cocky, caring, romantic, optimistic, sometimes silly, sometimes way off the mark. Behind all those things is an inherent, ingrained naïveté, like the all-betraying dimple in even the craggiest of faces.

So we had a purpose. It was vague and loosely defined, I see now, a year later. It was better defined by what it wasn't: we weren't interested in inflicting on a suffering-enough world one more empty pop magazine, and we were even less interested in producing another magazine masquerading as a music journal but actually stuffed and infested with boring, unsightful profiles of boring, unsightful people and issues. I'm not saying that such a magazine doesn't have a fine place in society, I'm just saying that this was not SPIN's dream or calling. Nor was our purpose just to better *Rolling Stone*—maybe there are things about it we will never better, undoubtedly there are things we already have. But it doesn't matter. SPIN was inspired by a perceived void, but its purpose is not merely to fill a hole like so much literary cement.

What we wanted to do was create a great music magazine that dealt exclusively with music as music itself does, which is to say not exclusively at all. Music deals with every passion and every intellectual consideration—more, it is the most emotional medium of all, therefore the most penetrating and effective and undefeatable. We wanted SPIN to both bring into focus the world of music and to deal in its same values—intelligence, sensitivity, rebellion, irrepressible optimism, indefatigable romance, directness, and humor. Music is the Special Forces of the arts—not necessarily the supreme art, though just about every nonmusician will tell you it is, and comprised of misfits as often as talents. Music calls a strange soul and operates in different, unborded territories than the other arts. There are no ranks in music.

Our first year has thundered by like one of those three-minute terror rides at a theme park where time and all your senses are crushed together and suspended so that you have the illusion of the ride taking a lifetime in one breath.

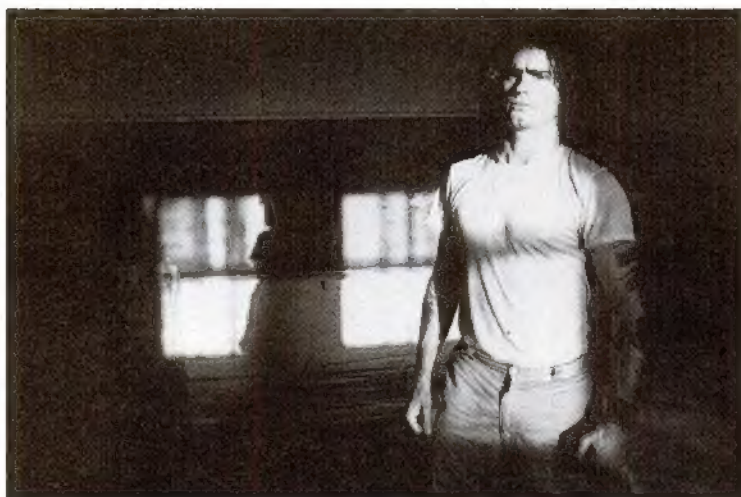
We got our first real national recognition with the Ike Turner story in our fourth issue (August '85). While Tina Turner's story echoed everywhere and became as familiar as a soap opera, we went and looked for Ike, and the gods smiled at our efforts and showed us where he was. We broke some other great stories nationally too—David Crosby, Fela, Sly Stone, the go-go scene in Washington, crack, and the desperate story of what happened to heiress Janice Hughes ("To Live and Die in L.A.," in this issue). We scored some scoop interviews—Bob Dylan, Debbie Harry, Miles Davis, Buddy Rich, Eno, and John Lee Hooker (this issue)—and we published the first, last, and only American interview with Bronski Beat—only to find out later that the group actually split before we ran the story, but the writer convinced them to keep it a secret until he got our check.

We recorded a radio show to promote one issue, and now SPIN Radio Concerts and SPIN Underground are two of the most syndicated radio shows in America. The magazine is on sale in most of what we call the free world. In Hungary, the national radio network translates and reads the whole issue over the air each month.

We had fun, we had problems. We had some bad luck but much more good luck, and we had a lot of help. Most of all, we worked so well and so hard together.

We challenged the PMRC to debate us at New York University and they refused. I was even prevented from speaking at George Washington University by the school's dean, after a professor had invited me, on the grounds I was "too controversial." It's been a great year. I hope they're all like this.

When I was 9 years old and we lived in London, my father took me to Penthouse's printing plant. It was small, musty, and steadily but softly and almost rhythmically noisy, the sort of noise you can speak over without shouting. I remember all this distinctly because I remember being so bored and totally exhilarated at the same time. And, I feel, my father simultaneously watched me with the indifference of a parent lugging a child around and with the timeless, essential concern of a parent looking for his offspring's understanding and appreciation and even approval of his work. All these years later I know that I understood perfectly, although I could not have



Josh Cheuse



Paul C. Colliton

explained it, of course.

It's well known—partly because I never stop telling everybody—that my father lent me the money to start SPIN. It is less well known—because how could it be—that this tough man who I love so much gave me so much more, more than I can tell you here. Of course we fought too, maybe harder than most, but at the end of the day my biggest debt to him, which is the wisdom and love he gave me, is the only one he doesn't want repaid. If, someday, my kids feel about me the way I feel about him, I will consider my life a great success. Thanks, Dad, I love you.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

Top: Black Flag's Henry Rollins responding to constructive criticism; Bob Guccione, Sr., (left) and Bob Guccione, Jr.

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"It's not Sauza"

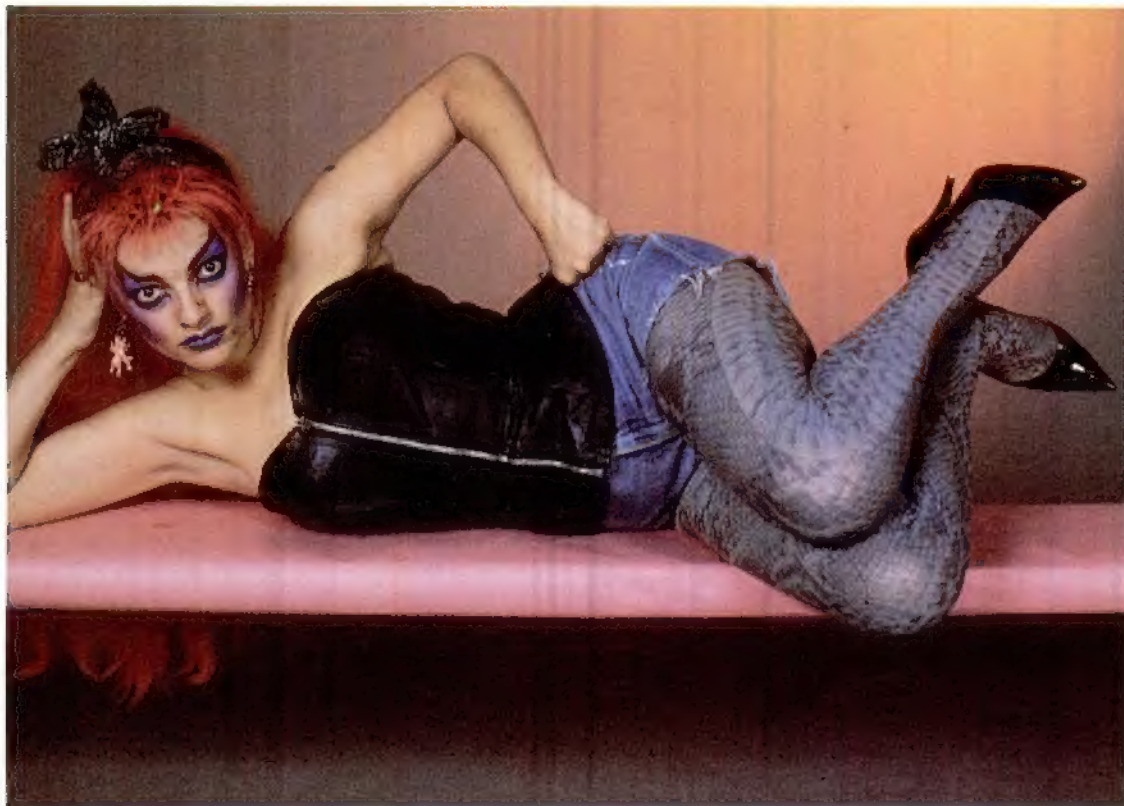


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M. Marrow/Shooting Star

Nina Hagen: An angel made her do it.

Letters

Edited by Karen J. Dolan

Crack—a killer story

I read with great interest and feeling Barry Michael Cooper's exposé of the new danger and potential killer that is taking New York by storm ("Crack," February). It seems that crack is and will be the newest way for individuals to destroy themselves. People should realize that once their "monster" is satisfied with cocaine, this drug will take over their personality, lifestyle, and soul. I burned many bridges. I hurt many people. Now I walk as an individual with self-confidence, self-esteem, and a clear mind. It is much better than "straining under the weight of a cage full of zombies, genies, and laughing ghouls."

Ted Sclaros
New York, NY

Nina Hagen

When your mag came out, an angel told me that when the time was right yours would be the magazine to do an in-depth article on Nina Hagen (February). The vision has come true! Cosmic enlightenment radiated from the pages of the article. She told us of so many solutions for our planet. Jesus and the UFOs are coming, and now more people will know and believe.

Douglas Becci
Moscow, ID

Although I have enjoyed some of Nina Hagen's music artistically in the past, I feel it was irresponsible of her to glorify LSD and of SPIN to present her comments in the light it did. If indeed "God" exists, "God" most certainly did not invent LSD. LSD was invented and distributed by psychochemists and psychiatrists in an effort to make guinea pigs out of institutionalized humans. The fact that it was popularized by teenagers looking for a thrill in the '60s (as Hagen undoubtedly was) is a tribute to human stupidity.

Dave Dumanis
San Diego, CA

Townshend

Are we supposed to believe that Billy Altman sat down to listen to *White City* (Spins, February) with an open mind? Townshend got the Who off and running by ripping off Ray Davies? Please, give me a break. I think Billy's been baking in the Shea Stadium press box for too long. Why not stick to writing about the Mets and leave rock 'n' roll and Townshend's shortcomings to those who know something about the subject.

Steve Roeser
Los Angeles, CA

Just what is wrong with Townshend's "back-to-the-roots" approach? Does it surprise you that some people are concerned with their past? Townshend's "contemplation of the sociopolitical ramifications of life inside a racially mixed housing project" is an examination of a real-life problem. I honestly do not think that bringing up real problems of a real world is boring. If anything, it is stimulating.

Dean Raymond
Syracuse, NY

Dr. Demento

My compilation album for Rhino Records, *Dr. Demento Presents the Greatest Novelty Records of All Time*, may have its faults—none of which the reviewer, Annie Russo (February), discerned. Instead she uses a column and a half for rambling, mean-spirited diatribe against the whole idea of novelty music itself. Shouldn't SPIN be opening readers' minds to all musical experiences, not closing them with witless sarcasm?

At least Russo might have gotten her facts straight (maybe by reading the booklet that comes with the set). Rhino Records did not invent Dr. Demento. I have been using that name on radio since 1970.

For a while I thought this review was some sort of parody of '80s music journalism. As Russo asserts, though, parody requires some sort of intelligence . . . there goes that theory!

Barry Hansen (Dr. Demento)
Culver City, CA

Professional Sex Pistols

I was very impressed with your article on famous punks and what they're doing today (January). It was very informative, especially to a person who hasn't been back to the East Village since Sid died! However, your two writers somehow "forgot" to mention the current doings of Paul Cook and Steve Jones, former members of the infamous Sex Pistols. They are both currently in a band called the Professionals.

Heather Mangrum
Hartsdale, NY

The fate of Voodoo

I found your magazine really top-notch until I read the Wall of Voodoo review in your February issue. It started out well, but then I came to a big mistake—the misspelling of Stan Ridgway's name. Then I read an even bigger mistake: Tomashoff seems to think that Andy Prieboy is a better vocalist than Stan Ridgway. It doesn't come down to who is the better vocalist, but who is the better vocalist for Wall of Voodoo. The answer is Stan Ridgway. Ridgway's unemotional, spoken vocals are what made Wall of Voodoo so unique, so great. My only hope is that Ridgway will return and save Wall of Voodoo from a terrible fate.

Greg Chapman
Little Silver, NJ

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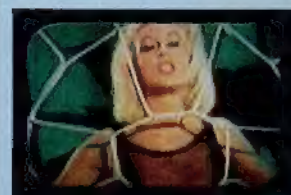
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FLASH

Edited
by
James
Truman



Scopitone stars: Joi Lansing takes a bath (left) after being trapped "In the Web of Love" (above); Barry Young sings "One Has My Name" (top); Neil Sedaka's "Calendar Girl" (middle).

THE HISTORY OF ROCK VIDEO

The Importance of Lingerie; the Problem of Lawsuits

See young Neil Sedaka do the frug! Watch Frank Sinatra, Jr. and a pair of cuties cavort by a swimming pool! Thrill to the sight of Joi Lansing in a hot tub with her witch doctor! Throw away those stupid modern rock videos!

Though not the first music-performance clips—the ball was originally set rolling in the '30s—the Scopitone films of the early 1960s stand as the true antecedents of contemporary pop video. At their best (not always dissimilar to their worst), Scopitones held a franchise on the kind of joyful, artless kitsch that now floods MTV. Except that kitsch was better than. How much better? Imagine any three Elvis Presley movies condensed into a single promo clip and you have a recipe for the perfect Scopitone.

Invented in France after World War II, the first Scopitone machine arrived in America in 1963, in the form of a huge jukebox topped off with a 26-inch back-projection movie screen. After initial tryouts in bars and restaurants around Miami, it was deemed to be hot: a Scopitone factory was set up in Chicago, orders came in from across the country, clip production went into overdrive.

Shot quickly in front of cheap, garish backdrops, the clips made a virtue of their low-production values. Aside from a few up-and-comers like Neil Sedaka and Debbie Reynolds, most featured unknown talent and, by way of compensation, a lot of models in skimpy swimsuits. Sedaka's "Calendar Girl," a classic of the genre, featured 12 of them, one for each month. "The concept was all theirs," he recalls. "I didn't see any rushes, I didn't see anything until it was in completed form. Fortunately, I rather liked it."

By the beginning of 1965, Scopitone had produced nearly 100 clips, had machines installed across the country, and were reporting a backlog of 2,500 orders. Two years later they were out of business, bankrupt. So what happened? The first setback came in March 1966, when Scopitone made a clip of the Backporch Majority performing a song called "Mighty Mississippi." Conceived as a lively hoedown in the manner of *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, the final result featured less of the group than it did of the chorus girls' underwear. Outraged and claiming that the smut was added without their permission, the group's management slapped a \$5 million dollar lawsuit on Scopitone. (It was not successful.) The following month, the *Wall Street Journal* weighed in with a detailed exposé of the company's alleged ties with several underworld figures. The decline had begun. But what finally finished Scopitone is still a matter of debate. Some claim it was a group of jukebox barons who, worried by the threat of video jukes, conspired to bump them out of the market. Others say the problem lay in the machines themselves; the complex mechanism of 16 millimeter film loops with synchronized sound tracks made them woefully unreliable. But what is certain is that Scopitone's dream of having a machine in every bar in the country and high-rate advertising spliced into the film clips came to nothing. (They never got a single ad.)

Following the company's financial collapse in 1967, most of the machines ended up on the scrap heap. However, many of the clips were salvaged by private collectors across the country. There are currently plans to put them together for a TV special on Scopitone. It would prove a valuable historical point: rock video was born tacky.

—James Truman

White Dopes on Punk

What kind of punk band comes to New York and gets mugged in one of the city's safer neighborhoods? Or, when asked for a juicy band story, collectively stammers and blushes through an innocently incomplete account of the time the rhythm guitarist got stoned and laid in Chicago? Or cites Leonard Cohen and Phil Ochs as its biggest influences? Meet Squirrel Bait, the world's most cuddly punk band. They play savage rock and roll—Husker Du guitarist Bob Mould considers the *Squirrel Bait* album on a par with anything his band has done—but they could be the Breakfast Club.

If you lived in Louisville, Kentucky, Squirrel Bait might be a page out of your high school yearbook. There's 17-year-old Brian McMahan, a pint-sized elf in giant Annie Hall glasses who could pass for Anthony Michael Hall's younger brother. Brian plays a crummy-sounding Vox guitar and wears an earring, but his parents don't give him any flak. "My parents are totally weak and helpless," he says. Brian reads Kurt Vonnegut and—the Chicago incident notwithstanding—has been going out with the same woman for over a year. Singer Peter Searcy, an 18-year-old Capricorn, is a prototypical Catholic school jock. Peter wears goofy pastel



shorts onstage and claims to be naked in the studio. Guitarist David Grubbs, a freshman at Georgetown, gets embarrassed when his parents read reviews of the band that contain the word "fuck." David is a Virgo, born on the autumnal equinox following the Summer of Love. He tells girls that he is a philosophy major. Gangly Clark Johnson plays bass and is too shy to introduce himself to Lydia Lunch. Ben

Daughtrey, at 20 the band's most senior member, makes Chico Marx faces when he plays drums and lists as his turn-ons "gefitte fish, Route 66, and the Beastie Boys." As you might imagine, the other members of the band think Ben is an asshole.

"Ben's a really great drummer," says Brian, "but—"

"—but they hate my guts," says Ben. "It's weird, there's like a clique

going on between these four [Brian, David, Clark, and, presumably, this writer] and me and Peter." Ben and Peter even quit the band once on the eve of a date with the Meat Puppets.

"And we hated them so much," says Brian, "that we played anyway."

"But," Ben interrupts, "it's neat because as bad as we get along, when we're playing, we actually look at each other and smile sometimes."

Sometimes," snorts Brian.

With this strained camaraderie, and with David and Clark away at college, Squirrel Bait isn't as together as it might be, at a winter break gig the band sounded pretty rocky. But friction may be part of their secret. "When we sucked," says David, "we got along great." And despite a few awkward silences and sloppy changes, it was still a shock to hear such crunching rock pouring out of these cute, slightly geeky teenagers. Squirrel Bait makes the Beastie Boys look like... well, the Beastie Boys, but that isn't the point. The point is that Bob Mould is right: these kids rock the fuck out. Sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Grubbs.

—John Leland

Singer Peter Searcy (left) and drummer Ben Daughtrey

Yakety Yak

Being spokesman for a generation is the worst job I ever had.

Billy Bragg

I did think of joining up when the Falklands crisis was on, if someone invades your country it's not fair, is it?

Bernard Sumner, New Order

We're probably worse miming than we are playing.

Stephen Morris, New Order

Reagan? I like him. A president to me, should look good. I like the fact that he dyes his hair and wears makeup. I like Nixon too. I don't know anything about politics.

Paul Westerberg, The Replacements

How tragic. Is that the one the schoolteacher was on?

Ronald Reagan,
on learning that the shuttle exploded

HERCULES

Despite the way it functions as a skin mag for the drug subculture, *High Times* deserves much credit for its "Funny Pages" section. Over the years, it has given rare and welcome space to such "new wave" (a.k.a. "punk," "messy," or "scratch") artists as Ron Hauge, Santiago Cohen, and Gary Panter. But best of all, the magazine has recently been featuring Mark C. Marek's *Hercules Amongst the North Americans* strips. If you missed them, don't worry: on April 1 Penguin publishes them together in book form.

Marek's last book, *New-Wave Comics*, also originated as a magazine strip—in *National Lampoon*—and pretty much typified the kind of studiously un-studious graphic wild style practiced by the latest generation of comic artists. His stint at the *Lampoon* appears to have honed his punch lines: *Hercules* is even better than *The Flintstones*. Part cavalier hero, part ignorant lug—imagine Don Quixote as played by Sylvester Stallone—Marek's *Hercules* is an untiring adventurer, whose quest for epic challenges takes him through the gamut of modern American life. Readers can thrill to the demigod's run-ins with Midas mufflers, the psychiatrist who diagnoses a reverse Oedipus complex, the aerobics instructor, the game-show host who flunks him on ancient Greek history. But is all this well-researched, you ask? "I did my research when I was a kid," says Marek. "I didn't want the strip to be mythologically sound. I wanted it to be a layman's mistaken attempt at mythology."

Marek's most recent project was to design a strip



for the new Rolling Stones LP, *Dirty Work*. In the meantime, mythrales and all, *Hercules Amongst the North Americans* is at least semi-divine.

—Richard Gehr

They keep going. They think everybody's a criminal. Cab drivers are snobs. They think every white boy ain't gonna jump outta the cab and every black guy like me, dressed like me, is either going to jump out of the cab or take the cab. The radio doesn't make it harder to catch a cab because they figure you can't run too far with it. What about a Walkman? I got one of them. I like music. When I got my Walkman, I turn the volume way past 10. Do you write your songs on the streets, with the radio on? I do it in my room, late at night. Without the radio. Do you write or type the words out? Write. Who are some of your favorite poets? Langston Hughes, maybe. Kurtis Blow is great, as is Run-D.M.C. I like the Beastie Boys, Whodini. Don't most rap songs sound the same? What do you mean? You can listen to a lot of singing songs, and they all sound similar. You telling me, "In his division he'll enjoy the collision. Like a surgeon with a scalpel to make an incision" is the same as "I see you between classes when my mind's at the task / One glimpse of your eye and my heart beats fast"? Does the "King of Rap" sound like "Don't You Dog Me"? Whodini is R&B, almost mainstream. Fat Boys is bubble gum. Run-D.M.C. is hard B-boys. You can't compare. Ever use a rhyming dictionary? No, that's cheating. You wanna know something? 'Cause I'm a gangster, some people think I do crime. They don't know I'm just a connoisseur of hip hop rhyme. Some people try to call LL a hoodlum with time, but he don't know my autograph's on his wife's behind.

—Scott Cohen

LL Cool J and his neighborhood following go crazy in the streets.

Yakety Yak

What people say means absolutely nothing. When the record comes out it's like a receipt for me to say "fuck off"

—Bill Laswell

It makes people think a little bit more about love on this planet
—Philip Michael Thomas on his new line of Machiavelli sports cars

Lydon vs McLaren: The End of the Affair

Early in 1976, the Sex Pistols were a good idea trying to get started, gate-crashing other people's concerts—with instruments allegedly stolen from rich pop stars—and hustling for a living. After three years, seven U.K. Top 10 hits and the internationally publicized death of Sid Vicious, they ceased to exist as anything more than an item on an accountant's balance sheet.

Exactly 10 years later, on January 13, 1986, their corpse was being exhumed in London's High Court, after the two principal players in the drama, John Lydon and Malcolm McLaren, flew in from America to face each other through their lawyers.

On the surface, the case was a straightforward wrangle about money—an estimated £880,000 (\$1.2 million) in unpaid royalties plus, of course, rights to future exploitation of the Sex Pistols' name. On one side was Lydon, alert and attentive at the front of the courtroom, along with fellow ex-Pistols Paul Cook and Steve Jones (in absentia), and Anna Beverley, Sid Vicious's mother; on the other, McLaren and his management companies, Glitterbest and Matrixbest. As the conduct of the case quickly made clear, the case marked the final act in the long-running power struggle between Lydon and McLaren.

This partnership, which had worked so spectacularly throughout 1976 and early 1977, had dissolved in mutual mistrust and antipathy by the time of the Sex Pistols' last appearance, in San Francisco on January 14, 1978. Lydon severed all connections with the band, while McLaren strove to keep it alive through Sid Vicious and the project which, damagingly for his case, ate into Sex Pistols money: *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle* film. Following a suit that Lydon brought against McLaren in 1979—during which the other two surviving Sex Pistols changed sides to support the singer—the group's assets were frozen and placed in the hands of an official receiver. McLaren effectively lost control over the Sex Pistols and the *Swindle* film, which may have accounted for the butchered state in which it was released. During the last seven years, the receiver has quietly been collecting royalties from Sex Pistols records—which continue to sell around the world—and it was this money which was in dispute.

Though a reasonable amount



Bo Diddley's Guide to Survival

Alcohol and Drugs Only drink Grand Marnier, and that's to keep the throat from drying up in a place where there's a lot of smoke. As for drugs, a big NO.

Food Eat anything, anything you can get your hands on. I mean it!

Health Whenever you get to feeling weird, take Bayer aspirin. I can't stand taking all that other bullshit.

Money Always take a lawyer with you, and then bring another lawyer to watch him.

Defense I can't go round slapping people with my hands or else I'd go broke. So I take karate and kick when I fight. Of course, I got plenty of guns—one real big one. But guns are for people trying to take your home, not some guy who makes you mad. I used to be a sheriff down in New Mexico for two and a half years, so I know not to pull it right away.

Cows If they wanna pay, and you don't wanna make pets out of 'em, and you can't eat 'em—then get rid of 'em!

Women If you wanna meet a nice young lady, then you try to smell your best. A girl don't like nobody walking up in her face smelling like a goat. Then you don't say crap like, "Hey, don't I know you?" The first thing you ask her is, "Are you alone?" If she tells you that she's with her boyfriend, then you see if the cat's as big as you—if you don't have no money, just smell right. And for God's sake don't be pulling on her and slapping on her. You don't hit the girls. If you do this, you can't miss.

Hearing Just don't put your ears in the speakers.

Ethan Klingsberg

of money, it was obviously not enough to support a long court case at an estimated \$14,000 a day. On the first day, therefore, Lydon's counsel played a bluffing hand, dragging out his submission to the point where even the judge was demonstrably bored. Reports that evening estimated the case would last at least two months before any resolution. This had the desired effect. McLaren, wishing to return to Los Angeles, agreed to settle on Lydon's terms—handing over his companies and relinquishing his counterclaim for payment of management fees from the group's earnings. So although the next two days were spent in negotiations, the result was a foregone conclusion. As reporters clustered around a victorious Lydon on

the final day, McLaren was nowhere to be seen.

Lydon's public vindication came with excellent timing at the beginning of a retrospective orgy on the part of the British rock press: the tenth anniversary of punk rock was bigger news than the court case. The irony of this cannot have been lost on the case's participants, who have all spent recent years trying to outdistance the phenomenon they helped create: Paul Cook with his new group, Chiefs of Relief, Lydon with his new, Bill Laswell-produced album and single, and McLaren with his various film and theatrical projects. For them, at least, the corpse has perhaps finally been laid to rest.

—Jon Savage

The Michelob Light Guide To Making It In The Real World.

SUCCESS WORKOUT

CAREER AEROBICS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Schedule Juggling:
start with "asleep"
then "awake," build
from there.

Workload Balancing:
attempt until vacation, then
exercise **WORKLOAD
DUMPING.**

Arm Circles:
don't be foolish, this
is as silly as
it looks.

Finger Taps:
give the old company
Wats line a long
distance workout.

Neck Nods:
relieve stress,
particularly if performed
in unison with boss.

Shoulder Shrugs:
beginner's exercise,
best followed by
vigorous neck nods.

Briefcase Lunge:
martial art, useful
on public transit
systems.

Coffee Cool-Down:
tedious a.m. exercise,
but preferable to
seared lips.

Kicks:
enjoyable release,
but not on company
time.

Dry Clean & Press:
practice with trained Oriental professionals.
Warning: heavy starch will chafe.

Seat Rolls:
found to boost
office mobility. Avoid
pedestrians and stairwells.

COMMON SUCCESS WORKOUT INJURIES

Broken appointments, grin splints, wingtip foot,
deadline cramps. As with any workout, continuous
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Sex & Drugs & Something Else: Dr Ruth talks to Ozzy Osbourne

Ozzy was already a Dr. Ruth fan, he even arrived early. Dr. Ruth had never been to a rock concert, but left the restaurant knowing which would be her first. The monster of rock and the mother-confessor they got along famously. "Ozzy, do you talk to your wife while you're having sex?" "Only if she telephones in the middle of it." There you have it! "You're one of the most incredible people I've ever met," admitted Ozzy, about a dozen times. "I love this man!" chimed in Dr. Ruth, as only Dr. Ruth could while sitting on a monster of rock's lap. But first they talked. Dr. Ruth opened the debate

Now Ozzy, I understand that there has been a tremendous transformation in your life. You have in the past been a wild person, on drugs and doing crazy things onstage. Let's talk a little bit about that. I've always been a wild person. What happened was that I left my former band Black Sabbath, and I was down on my luck, I was drinking a lot, getting myself messed up. I just wasn't functioning as a human being.

Did you know it?

I didn't, no. When something like that is happening to you, you're not conscious of it. You see, I was reared to believe that you're born, you grow up, you get married and that's it. But it didn't happen that way. I was married, I had three children, and I couldn't understand why it wasn't working for me. I was just terribly confused. It was like I was existing through this tunnel of garbage. I was getting up in the middle of the night to drink. I was on three or four bottles a day. I didn't think I had anything left but to die of alcoholism. And I was taking drugs like you wouldn't believe. Why do so many stars like you do that? Because of availability. When you're a rock star you get the dealers around you. It's like part of the fantasy, and you live a certain pattern in your life for that fantasy. What drugs were you taking? Cocaine, lots of it.

Did you ever do that other stuff—heroin?

No. I'm frightened of needles. But I was just getting myself messed up mentally. I didn't know which direction I was going in. I didn't know why I was doing it. I was beginning to hate the world, and myself. What changed you?

Two things. Fortunately, I realized that I had a problem and that I had to try and get myself fixed. But the real thing was meeting and falling in love with Sharon, my wife. I never thought love like that could really exist. It was all like a fantasy in a magazine, boy meets girl. She manages me, she works with me, she's my wife, and I love the ground she walks on.

When you met her, was that at the time you were down?

Yes. Aha! So she fell in love with you, not the big rock star.

She helped me not only in my career, but in my personality, my clothes, my attitude everything. She advised me, she screamed at me.



Paul O. Cellier

She screamed at you when you did bad things?

Yes. It was very weird to readjust to that. I've had so much freedom in my life, I was a ways the ruler of the roost, I never allowed anyone to step on my territory. But my wife is very strong willed. Who made the decision that you should go to the Betty Ford Clinic? Sharon. My wife can move mountains. Behind Ozzy Osbourne the madman, there is a very positive person. When you say Ozzy the madman... right now I'm sitting next to you, and I'm a very experienced therapist. I don't feel I'm sitting with a madman!

That's the entertainer side of me. Ozzy is the man behind the clown's mask. The person who paints the mask on the clown is my wife. She's the driving force. If it was left to me I'd be lying in bed eating popcorn. I'm very lazy. But I'm also a very good cook, and very good with my three children. The public doesn't see that side of Ozzy. Do you change the diapers?

Yes. Do you get up at night for them?

Er... no!

(Laughter)

Dr. Ruth, let me ask you a question. I've heard your program. Do you think all those calls are serious?

No. Sometimes people call in because they want to be on the air. But deep down I always find something in their questions to respond to.

Do you ever get embarrassed by questions?

No. I am very old-fashioned. I'm a square. So people really ask me very good questions about relationships. About sexual functions, men having difficulty with erections or women who don't have sexual

satisfaction.

It's fantastic.

Ozzy, people like you in the rock business, there are always women who are willing to do anything to go to bed with you. How do you deal with that?

I'll be perfectly honest. I'm a man who has desires. I do have fantasies. It's a natural thing. Absolutely.

To walk down the street and see some person and think, "I could have a good time with her..." For someone to say to me, "I'd never do that"—I think that person is sick in the head. It's bullshit. Right.

So yes, I do have fantasies. But I've been around. I've done all the things rock 'n' roll stars are supposed to do.

Like going with the groupies?

Yeah, I've gone with the groupies. Which are boring, they are BORING.

Because they admire you so much?

You don't get any sexual satisfaction out of them. It's like some piece of meat. Since meeting Sharon... I can talk to her. We have a very active sex life, which you can tell from the fact that we've had three children in three years. (Laughs.)

But before, how did you manage with the groupies?

You do those things because they're there. It's like a kid in a cake shop. So yes, you've got to be a liar to say you never did. Of course I did. I went crazy for about 10 years. But then I began to feel like an object for their satisfaction. I wasn't getting anything out of it. A quick shot and it was all over. I didn't want to see them. I didn't want to talk to them. I just wanted them out of my bed.

Did it ever happen that in the morning you

woke up and couldn't remember their names?

All the time! I couldn't even remember where I'd found a lot of them. Ozzy, tell me something about your childhood.

My childhood was very unhappy. I came from a family of six. My father worked in a factory, and we never had much money. I wanted so much for my parents. I was very embarrassed because we never had anything. I remember finding my mother in tears because she couldn't afford to buy us this or that. I was always afraid that one day my mother would never come home.

That you'd be abandoned?

Yes, I suppose so. Up to this day I'm very insecure. I've been to psychiatrists about it. I'm a very shy person, believe it or not. I believe that. Were your parents proud of what you did?

They were proud. But the environment where I come from, the family member who has the success is expected to support the rest, and I rebelled against that because I believe that each and every one of us has the same right to do the same things. I do take care of my mother, but it would be nice someday if she said to me: "How are you doing, Ozzy? It's good to see you, you look tired." But I seem to have grown away from them. I find it very difficult to relate to a lot of my family.

Do they feel you've just outgrown them?

I don't think they do, but I feel that way. Is that so wrong?

Nothing's wrong. It's just the way you feel, and sometimes people just outgrow their backgrounds. Ozzy, what does the future hold for you?

Well, I've had an operation so I can't have any more children.

You've had a vasectomy? Whose idea was that?

Mine, because I'm 37, and I think three children is enough.

Are you glad you had the operation, so now you can have sex without worrying about contraception?

Yes. Because Sharon and I have really good sex. We connect so much. She isn't exactly Miss World with her figure, but that doesn't matter. She's got a beautiful face, and I think she's a beautiful person.

And that's what's important. It's not necessarily the shapely Miss America figure. Ozzy, what are those tattoos?

You want to see them?

(Ozzy starts to take off his shirt.)

Don't undress entirely! Oh my gosh! I've never seen anything like that in my life! Aren't your children scared when they see that?

Oh, no.

Tell me, do they mean something?

Not really. They're just pictures on my belly. And the long hair... you look lovely to me, but is there a reason for it?

It's just the way I like to be. It's part of my individuality.

Ozzy, you just have a new record out. Will you also be playing concerts?

Yes. I'll be playing Madison Square Garden in the spring. Will you come?

I'd love to.

Bring earplugs.



A Jungle Drama, and Other True Stories about the Violent Femmes

On June 7, 1985 (Gordon Gano's birthday), a 22-year-old American woman named Sue Carroll was found after being lost for five days in the rain forests of Suriname, South America. She had been on an anthropological assignment and had accidentally wandered off the trail. In an effort to stop herself from thinking about the fact that she was lost, she sang to herself. In her repertoire were many Violent Femmes tunes, including "I Hear the Rain," "Jesus Walking on the Water," and "Sweet Misery Blues." She discovered that they helped her keep hold on her sanity. Finally, she was rescued by a bush family, who found her wandering alone in the jungle.

Gordon Gano isn't much easier to find. Don't expect him to be on time and, most important, don't reckon that he's going to make up his mind. Gordon Gano is a Gemini. The Violent Femmes have finished their third album, *The Blind Lead the Naked*, and, by the time you read this, will have played Carnegie Hall. After wandering if the famous New York concert hall hasn't gone downhill, Gano grows sincere. "I'm thrilled," he admits. "Its historical importance, its position, its stature . . . it's exciting." This is a man who consistently wore a bathrobe to school on Mondays during his last

two years of high school. Was he sober when he wore one on stage at Irving Plaza last fall? "I have no comment."

Gordon Gano adores his parents. The son of a reverend and an actress, he was influenced by their love for "hymns, country music, and show music. I grew up in the church," he says. "Both my father and my mother have been, and continue to be, in professional theater. My mother was on Broadway." The light in Gano's eyes comes through the receiver. You hear him ask her how long she was on Broadway. The answer, barely audible on the New York to Wisconsin line, is "years." He wonders if it might be demeaning to describe her as a chorus girl. He decides that it wouldn't.

During the soundcheck at the Folk City benefit, Joan Baez walked over to the Femmes and said that the band came highly recommended to her. The recommendation came from her son. "At times we meet these musicians that we've listened to, lists of these people, and now their children are really into us." But Gano's real thrill that day was having his picture taken with Melanie. "You know Melanie? Who she is? Well, I've got a picture somewhere and I better find the card of the photographer who took it!" His enthusiastic recollection ends in a

tender, gruff voice. "I just wanted to shake her hand."

The sometimes sexy, sometimes virtuous combination of exorcism and angst primed in early Femmes material can cause confusion in its images of love, but gives pleasure in its hoedown lack of seriousness. *The Blind Lead the Naked*, produced by Jerry Harrison, offers more of the same, but with a different twist. Like the previous LPs, it takes time to get used to, only now it's no longer a matter of raw rock antics. This time, the Violent Femmes visit their therapist and confront him with maniacal alter egos possessed by various decades: they are a political thrash band ("Old Mother Reagan"), a nightmare guitar band ("No Killing"), a Patti Smith sack-hop band ("No Killing")—and, still, themselves.

It has been a swift three years since they were "discovered" playing on a hometown sidewalk by the Pretenders. There is now a hockey team in Chicago that worms up to the music of the Violent Femmes. Dancers in the Mark Morris Dance Group perform "I Hear the Rain" complete with bathrobes . . . And Carnegie Hall. This Milwaukee trio deserves dubs on the next beer commercial.

—Michelle Krell

ELVIS SHAMPOO

Elvis is king of the bathroom. It was, after all, in his bathroom at Graceland that he died. This spring, the King returns to his domain—with Elvis Presley "Love Me Tender" Shampoo, Conditioner, Moisturizing Lotion, and Bubble Bath Oil. Each will sell for \$3. For about \$16, however, you can buy a commemorative gift pack with all four toiletries plus an antique bronze coin.

The brainchild of Natural Choice Industries—which also markets Pink Panther Hot Cocoa and Marshmallows—these Elvis products are no cheap cash-in on a dead legend's name, it should be understood. "We looked very closely into several areas," says Gary Scaife, Natural Choice's marketing director. "It was our perception that Elvis was famous for his hair. He started a hair trend. A hair-care product bearing his name is quite appropriate. Also, with the 10th anniversary of his passing coming up, we believed there would be great public and media interest in such a unique product."

To gain rights to his name, Natural Choice worked closely with the executors of the Presley estate (namely, his wife, uncle, and an attorney), giving them final approval on the product and its packaging, an undisclosed fee up front, and a guarantee of royalties on bottles sold. These will be paid to the estate's beneficiary, the King's daughter, Lisa Marie Presley. "They have all tested the products, and they'll be sent samples of every manufacturing run to ensure quality consistency," adds Scaife. "Everyone feels very comfortable about it." Especially him, it appears. First-year sales are projected at five to 10 million.





ALL YOU NEED IS NERVE

It looks like a new Beatles album. Exactly. It sounds like a new Beatles album. Exactly. But is it a new Beatles album? Well, not exactly...

"I've seen a photocopy of the front and back sleeve," says Brian Southall, chief spokesman for Britain's EMI Records, "and yes, there are a lot of references to EMI, and lots of logos and bar codings and all sorts of things to give it an air of respectability."

The 'it' in question is *Sessions* — an LP originally put together by EMI for release last year, then shelved over objections from the remaining ex-Beatles and John Lennon's estate. Nevertheless, the LP's jacket says "marketed, manufactured, and distributed by EMI." The liner notes bear the name of Southall himself. And yes, the tracks are the same 13 tracks that EMI considered for the official album.

But this *Sessions* is not a real EMI album. If you see it at a swap meet or record store, rest assured of that. But rest assured also that this is the real Beatles.

Southall says EMI lawyers are aware of the counterfeit album and have begun an investigation to track down the source — obviously someone with access to the EMI vaults. "The liner notes are totally fictitious," he warns. "I'm somewhat indignant about having my name attached to notes I didn't write on an illegal album."

Counterfeit or not, the bootleg *Sessions* marks the first time that long-rumored leftover Beatles studio recordings have ever been "released." Although the sound quality of the counterfeit is not perfect, it gets an "A" by bootleg standards.

Among the tracks are "Come and Get It," the Beatles version (probably only McCartney and Ringo) of the song Paul wrote for Badfinger; "I'm Looking Through You," a slower, reggae-like version with instrumental break rather than middle-eight verse; "What's the

New Mary Jane," the long-bootlegged wacko session from 1969 featuring Lennon, Yoko Ono, and Harrison; "How Do You Do It?" the Mitch Murray hit George Martin intended as the Beatles' second single; and "If You've Got Troubles," a McCartney song sung by Ringo intended for *Rubber Soul*.

But the LP's real highlights are five tracks which are as good (if not better) than many things the Beatles did release. They are "Leave My Kitten Alone," a screamer (Lennon sings) left over from the 1964 *Beatles For Sale* sessions; "Not Guilty," a George Harrison track left off *The White Album* (and rerecorded for the 1980 *George Harrison* album); a 1963 version of "One After 909"; "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," a lovely acoustic demo by Harrison from 1968; and "That Means A Lot," a Lennon-McCartney song sung by Ringo during the *Help!* sessions.

And there's more. Southall acknowledged that more leftover Beatles music is owned by EMI, "mostly alternate versions of released material." In fact, four such recordings just emerged on yet another bootleg, *Nothing Is Real*. These are four different versions of "Strawberry Fields Forever," including the two patched together for the final release, and the very different, very pretty first take, with no overdubs. Told of this, Southall said simply: "Oh, God."

—Rip Rense





Copyright: Tamura

From Here to Absurdity with Frank Chickens

No, Frank Chickens isn't trying to put Frank Perdue or Colonel Sanders out of business. There's no Frank for a start, and the two Chickens, Kazuki Hohki and Kazumi Taguchi, are likely to pass themselves off as Martians—Japanese underground Martians.

"In Japan there are lots of Martians," they say in their strongly accented deadpan. "But you can't tell because we look just like Japanese. When the Martians take over, they'll put on a huge musical, using backing tapes. Right now we just have a few selections."

That's one version of the Frank Chickens story. The other is how this Japanese female duo from London became an overnight club

sensation and the darlings of the British rock press. They've opened for Billy Bragg and the Smiths, are produced and backed on vinyl by the Flying Lizards' Steve Beresford and David Toop. After a couple of quirky, danceable singles and an LP, they've just left their small indie label and hooked up with Bragg's manager. A new album is due out this spring, and in the wake of a couple of successful New York shows, they'll be back on these shores again soon.

Live, Frank Chickens' wackiness is out in force. The two are kitsch terrorists with a ferocious sense of humor—a cross between Japanese girls' comics, Monty Python, kabuki, and the B-52s, with a lot of tacky props thrown in. As for the name, it's one of those pseudo-English phrases the Japanese love to plaster on objects. They found this one on the side of a pencil.

The Chickens ransack the pop heaven where east meets west, the world of stranded Japanese housewives in pink plastic sunglasses. They also trash gender clichés and ethnic stereotypes, and plug disarmament. Like Bragg, they'll be touring as part of the Red Wedge, "the pop entertainment wing of Britain's Labour Party," as they call it. There's more to them than accents and politically correct sentiments, though. They've got a firm hold on the nuances of absurdity.

And yes, they just use backing tapes. It's cheap. Singing to ready-made backing tapes is also a venerable Japanese custom. Businessmen do it in bars, families do it at home. Frank Chickens started doing it as a joke three years ago. Now, with Toop and Beresford, they mix their own bizarre pastiches with names like "We Are Ninja" and "Yellow Detective."

"We say we want to do this song in this style," Kazumi explains, "say, reggae style. Or C&W. Or in the style of Japanese popular songs."

Recently the Chickens toured Japan for the first time. "Because we got a lot of attention in the west, they expected us to be very cool western pop stars," says Kazuki. "They pay to see us and they have to hear Japanese popular songs they want to forget. Some people got really angry."

—Catherine Bush

WORLD BEAT

True to his promises, revolutionary dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson has hung up his reggae shoes and given a self-proclaimed "farewell performance." He may still do one-offs, particularly as a solo reader, but his touring days with the Dennis Bovell Dub Band are history. . . . Olatunji, one of African music's first voices in North America, began '86 with a ferociously well-received New Year's Eve guest spot with friends the Grateful Dead. Five days later he debuted his masterwork, *Invocation to the Gods*, at San Francisco's Wolfgang's, with several local lights sitting in, including Airto and Mickey Hart. Hart is set to produce the drum master's next LP this spring. . . . The reggae video scene is being enriched by some homegrown Jamaican product, in particular a witty and feminist-approved "Girlie, Girlie" by Sophia George, who rails against men's double standards. Another amusing pair of shorts come from one of England's premier toasters, Smiley Culture, with "Cockney Translation" and "Police Officer." Dismayed that such well-produced clips fail to get any American exposure outside of a few small cable shows, New Yorker Catherine Tobias has founded Irie Iles Productions to make such videos available to clubs and private individuals. She can be reached at (212) 563-2292 for details. . . . Best

OK, Enough

Musicians' 10 favorite lies:

1. This is definitely the best thing we've ever done.
2. I don't screw groupies. Actually, I feel sorry for them.
3. The image isn't important. It's the music that counts.
4. I don't take drugs. Does anyone anymore?
5. The doctors said it was just exhaustion.
6. The parting was completely amicable.
7. We love our fans, they made us.
8. I know we'll still be around 10 years from now.
9. We only played Live Aid to feed the starving.
10. Write what you like about us, we don't care.



Linton Kwesi Johnson: less dub, more poetry.

Adrian Boal

wishes and a speedy recovery to Carlton Bryan, Steel Pulse's lead guitarist and recent solo artist (Nuclear Yard), who was seriously injured in an auto crash in upstate New York... If you'd like to check out an album that is the very definition of world best, one of the best releases out of San Francisco's burgeoning local scene is by the Rhyth-o-matics. *Walking in the Shadow* is on the new Catero label, and features, among others, West Africa's Joni Hasstrup on talking drums and percussion... This may be the year in which Bunny Wailer finally makes the big jump abroad in support of a host of new projects. At last, a label deal has been struck for the original Wailers LP with Shanachie, the small New Jersey firm founded to promote Gaelic folk music in the U.S. It'll be a double LP with the reunion sessions on one disc, while the other will feature some of the best of the Wailers' uncollected singles from their early Tuff Gong days. Two more Bunny albums are scheduled as well: *Resistance*, a roots LP that returns to the social commentary for which Wailer is best known, and another collection of lighthearted dance-hall tracks. Why the continuing preoccupation with get-away-from-it-all music from one of reggae's most militant and uncompromising spokesmen? "Time hard," says Bunny, "The people need some jollification cuz dem under so much pressure"... Speaking of small U.S. labels, three of the five Grammy nominees for 1986 are on 'em, and the first bombshell of the new year is that D.C.'s tiny RAS Records has signed '85 Grammy winners Black Uhuru to an exclusive three-year worldwide contract. RAS will be releasing their new work, *Brutal*, any day now... Brooklyn played host recently to two of Jah music's greatest proponents, JBC's Barry G and Capital Radio-London's Dave Rodigan. Their dub-plate (unreleased tracks on private pressings) battles are usually limited to JA and the UK, but they have begun to invade the States with this unique form of entertainment. With the cost of producing new recordings in Jamaica rising to prohibitive levels, it is the dance-hall toasters and singers, performing over prerecorded rhythms, who are carrying the live swing now.

—Roger Steffens

Yakety Yak

I don't drink as much as the British press has made it sound, but then, of course, I lie a lot to the press...

—Robert Smith, the Cure



Sigue Sigue Sputnik Stop at Nothing

If Tony James didn't have such a big mouth, you'd feel sorry for him because he looks so silly. He used to be Billy Idol's right hand man in Generation X, an early punk group whose records and concerts never quite captured the excitement of their publicity photographs. "Rock music," announces James, is full of one-idea merchants. Look at Billy—he's still using the idea I had in Generation X. He's getting an awful lot of mileage out of it, but has he done anything new? No. He's a bit of a cliché really, isn't he? He's a parody of all his heroes."

James' new branch is Sigue Sigue Sputnik, named after a Russian street gang. The band has so far won a deal worth \$1.5 million from EMI and enough press coverage to embarrass Brooke Shields. Martin ("I mean, I couldn't sing when I joined this group") Degville sports a bright orange wig, fake zebra-skin jerkin, tasseled leather trousers, and eye makeup painted like a Lone Ranger mask. His illustrious career began as a T-shirt designer in London's fashionable Kensington Market. Perhaps encouraged by the positive effect T-shirts had on Frankie Goes to Hollywood's record sales, Martin Degville is now planning to take over the world, helped by his friend Tony James.

"We intend to make Sputnik Industries the biggest entertainment industry of the '90s," says James. "Rock 'n' roll is toytown. It's just one step on the ladder. The next step is the film world, the one after that government." This might lead you to assume that the members of Sigue Sigue Sputnik are expert entertainers. Is their music commercial? "It has to be commercial to be a success, and we're looking for worldwide success," answers the humble progenitor.

Sputnik song titles include "Twenty-First Century Boy," "Jayne Mansfield," "Frankenstein Cha Cha Cha," and "Teenage Thunder." The sound is remarkably similar to such '70s glam-rock troupers as Sweet and Mott the Hoople. The album (title undecided at press

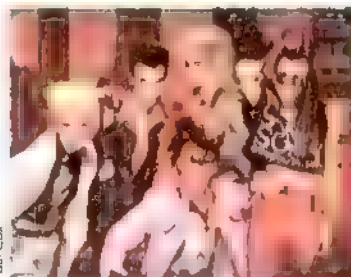
time) follows the single, which, in turn, follows the film. A two-minute cinematic oeuvre, written by the band members themselves, "Immaculate Conception" will be released before the single, which is, of course, the sound track. "It's an unusual way of doing it," admits James.

But then Sigue Sigue Sputnik is unusual. Even in the giddy world of British pop, it's fairly uncommon for a band to win a million-dollar deal on what, to the untrained eye, looks like a singular ability to show up at the right parties. "People say it's a big deal with EMI, but it's only a big deal if you never sell a record," he retorts. "People are full of how record companies are assholes and never do what you tell 'em. But record companies only work for you if they're genuinely excited by what you give 'em, so to get them to work and do what we want, we put the package together in such a way that they can't far to be caught up in the excitement."

Still, one might be forgiven for wondering what makes them different from such other nspid-sounding image purveyors as King 'Paul. King is saying: "Buy my record."

So are you
"We're saying: "Buy our record and it may give you some ideas."

—Jessica Berens



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FLASHES

Is Sean Penn the **Gerry Cooney** of photographer bashers? Following his recent TKO victory in Macao over **61-year-old** Leonel Borralho, questions are being asked in boxing circles about the **caliber of his opponents**. "Sean Penn has to quit fighting set-up fights," advises fight doctor Ferdie Pacheco. "It's time to step up in class and meet some real opposition." Penn's corner did **not get back to us**.

Meanwhile: Hong Kong newspapers, barred from the set of **Shanghai Surprise**, and desperate for news of **Mrs. Penn**, took to displaying wanted posters, offering cash rewards for information, sightings, or photographs. (The Chinese for **cretinous behavior** is 最蠢的行为.)

Has AOR gone too far? Such platinum **dead-certs** as James Taylor, Elton John, Barry Manilow, Olivia Newton-John, Diana Ross, and Kenny Rogers began 1986 with their lowest-charting albums in **years**. (That's 16, 15, 12, 9, 8, and 6 years, respectively.)

Red Wedge, Redskins, Red Box, Simply Red, Red Lorry, Yellow Lorry . . . UK pop **is seeing red**. Could this be why British youth **hate Chuck Norris movies**?

Plans are under way in Great Britain for the building of **three public monuments** to Bob Geldof (in London, Liverpool, and Dublin). That's **two more** than Nelson got, and three more than have been proposed for **Billy Bragg**.

Sandra Good is looking for a job. Previous experience: membership of the **Charles Manson** family, using stolen **credit cards**, and sending **death threats** to corporate officials. "Any employer interested in hiring her is welcome to contact me," says Vermont **parole officer** James Dean, straight-facedly.

Citing the many **lousy scripts** he has been offered, Ken Russell has renounced cinema and formed a **music video** production company.

Having watched the spectacular failure of **Revolution** push the British film industry close to bankruptcy, Hugh **Chariots of Fire** Hudson has announced his intention to enroll at Harvard this fall to study **moral philosophy**. This is not the same as music video, but **very close**.

Expect Hollywood to abandon **Rambo politics** shortly and rediscover its social conscience. Movies lined up for this year show an unmistakably **liberal** flavor. **Political corruption** will be a popular theme.

Before you even think of it: childhood trauma resulting from seeing the space shuttle explode **will not wash** as a psychological defense against murder charges or **anything else**. But prepare to hear it **widely used** from 1996 on.

The best **dance music** of the year will be out by summer: a **thunderous** collaboration between Bootsy Collins, ex-Parliament/Funkadelic, and producer Bill Laswell.

Newsweek's biggest selling issue last year had **Bruce Springsteen** on the cover; *Time*'s best-seller featured **Madonna**. Both mags fared worst with the same man. His dog is called **Rex**.

When Doves Cry

Pop music's social conscience, unveiled so spectacularly in 1985, has begun to show signs of buckling under pressure—the pressure of too many demands, too many benefit events, too many promoters who have seen charity promotions as a back door to the big time.

"Since Live Aid we've had an absolute flood of letters soliciting our support for charities," says Simple Minds manager Bruce Finlay. "My file is 3-400 pages thick. Some of them are crank, but most are tremendously worthwhile... It becomes embarrassing."

Significantly, Simple Minds have opted out of all the big charity packages scheduled for 1986. Instead they will donate proceeds from two of their own concerts—one in London in mid-March, the other, tentatively, in Los Angeles in August—to Amnesty International, the human rights organization which petitions for the release of political prisoners. The two concerts are expected to raise more than \$200,000.

"I myself am not a spokesman," says vocalist Jim Kerr (pictured right). "We just believe in the dignity of human beings and therefore support this cause."

Finlay was more outspoken. "These big benefits are no more than a smug way for successful rock stars to relieve their consciences."

Nevertheless, it appears that A-I-D doesn't always spell relief. With dozens of benefits planned for this year, in support of nearly as many causes (everything from the First Amendment and teenage pregnancy to cancer research and South African refugees), the premium on attracting big-name talent has risen dramatically. So too, apparently, has the wariness of the big-name acts.

A concert for the Live Aid fund, at New York's Radio City Music Hall, reportedly nearly foundered due to lack of artist support. (At press time, Kool and the Gang and Joan Jett were confirmed headliners.)

An AIDS benefit scheduled for Tampa Stadium in Tampa, Florida, on March 22 has run into even deeper problems. Announcing the concert at a press conference in January, Steven Ostrow, president of RJO Entertainment, said he hoped to raise \$25 million through a toll-free number that would flash across TV screens during the show's broadcast. He added that ABC and MTV were in "intensive negotiations" with him. However, officials at both companies have denied this.

Similarly, representatives of all the musical acts so far announced have denied their involvement. At press time, it was still unclear whether the concert would actually happen.

But the point is becoming clear: the momentum which carried Live Aid and Farm Aid—which, in effect, made them possible—has been diluted by their many successors. Like any roller coaster, the benefit bandwagon is hitting dips as well as peaks.

—Sue Cummings and Shaun Assael



Anton Corbijn



Hello Mary Lou, Goodbye Rick

Ricky Nelson may have been the whitest rock singer of them all, but he was OK in our book. Blame it on Ozzie.

Article by Stephen King

Not long before Elvis Presley walked into the studios of Sun Records, Sam Phillips is supposed to have said that if the Lord would send him a white man who sang black, he would be a rich man. Whether or not Phillips actually said it (and whether or not Elvis Presley actually did sing black) is a matter of opinion, but I don't think anyone ever confused the voice of Eric Hilliard Nelson with that of a black man. It was a voice so white it almost glowed in the dark, and if it had been Ricky Nelson instead of Elvis Presley who had wandered into Sun Studios, Phillips would undoubtedly have sent him down the road. Nelson and Presley shared only one thing—other than rock 'n' roll, that is: neither ever appeared on *American Bandstand*. They were probably the only two really big stars of rock's so-called golden age who didn't.

Like Elvis, Ricky Nelson didn't need the exposure. He had visited the nation's living rooms each week since 1952 (and would continue visiting until 1960), playing himself on ABC's *The Ozzie and Harriet Show*. A generation of Americans participated in the middle third of his childhood. They watched him grow from a wide-eyed, gap-toothed little kid (not bad looking but overshadowed by his older brother, David) to a teenager who may have been the most conventionally handsome rocker of an era that spawned dozens of them, from Fabian and Frankie Avalon to Gene Pitney (who wrote the Nelson hit "Hello Mary Lou"). Girls in bobby sox and Ben Casey blouses called such singers "cute." These sparkly white boys were the antithesis of such strange fellers as Jerry Lee Lewis with his rug of hair or Buddy Holly with his studious horn-rims (not to mention black guys like Fats Domino, Little Richard, and the positively necrotic Screamin' Jay Hawkins). At the height of his popularity, Ricky (who began performing as Rick Nelson on his 21st birthday) appeared in his own little segment at the end of each *Ozzie and Harriet* episode, singing in front of an adoring audience as white, squeaky clean, and utterly zitless as he was himself.

He was no driven, tortured artist. By his own testimony (which has always seemed a little too convenient to me to ring true), he started to play the guitar because he wanted to impress a girl who was gaga over Elvis. According to *TV Guide* (a publication that has never been exactly entranced with rockers), Ricky's career was "wound up like a watch-spring" by his father, Ozzie. It's probably true. Ozzie Nelson was a good deal more than TV's first sitcom dad, a sort of proto-Cosby; he was a shrewd businessman, an ex-bandleader, a friend of Les Paul, and a man who apparently followed pop music's steady movement toward R&B with more interest than alarm.

Ozzie may have passed on a bit of musical talent to his younger son and masterminded his career, but Ricky Nelson was not an easy sell. His first three records were released on a relatively small label (Verve), and Verve executives hardly knew what to make of Nelson's immediate success with a cover of Fats Domino's "I'm Walkin'." Shortly after, Nelson switched to Domino's own label,

Imperial.

Such foot-dragging on the part of the record companies must seem almost incredible to today's MTV-conditioned audiences, but Ricky Nelson was, in his way, the first of his kind—a TV celebrity who used his weekly audience to launch not only a singing career but also a brief period during which he was a bona fide rock idol. Before David and Sean Cassidy, before the Monkees, before Rick Springfield and half a dozen other freeze-dried TV popsters, there was Ricky Nelson . . . and the ironic thing is that, with the possible exception of Sean Cassidy (who really *could* rock once in a while, if he put his mind to it), he was the best of them.

Nelson died in a plane crash on New Year's Eve. He, his fiancée, and his band were flying in a DC-3 that crashed and burned following a fire that may have been caused by a torch used to smoke freebase cocaine. He was no longer the grinning kid from *The Ozzie and Harriet Show*, nor was he the sleepy-eyed (but cute, don't forget cute) teen idol who scored with "I'm Walkin'," "Stand Up," "Be-Bop Baby," and maybe half a dozen others. He was an almost forgotten man of 45. But the reason he ought to be remembered is that he was still rocking.

He was not Sam Phillips's archetypal white man with the black voice. He had no soul in the Otis Redding/Sam Cooke/Jackie Wilson sense, nor even in the Elvis/Jerry Lee/Buddy Holly sense. His delivery on many of the big hit songs is so laid back it is an inch from being monotonous; the kid who is waitin' in school sounds about as depressed as a kid who has just discovered a hangnail on his thumb. And on "It's Late," a jittery-funny-paranoid song about kids who just know they're going to catch a load of grief when they finally get home, Nelson seems to be narrating rather than agonizing. The voice that sings these songs is the voice of a kid whose biggest problems on any given day might include getting home from school and discovering that the last of the fudge ripple is gone or Mom forgot to get a fresh tube of Brylcreem. The same is true of "Travelin' Man," which was Nelson's last big hit until 1972's "Garden Party." In the hands of Sam Cooke (who had first shot at the song and turned it down), it could have been one big hurter of an album cut . . . but an album cut is all it ever would have been. In Ricky Nelson's hands, however, it became gently retrospective, regretful but not hurtful. In a pop market more interested in velvet than broken glass (at least when it came to ballads), "Travelin' Man" became a Top 10 hit.

If that was all there was to Ricky Nelson, a squib on the obit page would serve quite well. But there was more, even in those days. Nelson was somnolent on some of his hits, but he could and did get excited. When he sang "Be-Bop Baby" or "My Bucket's Got a Hole in It" there was an excited jive in his voice that matches the go-for-it rockabilly sound of the band he and Ozzie put together. In the end, rock is rock, whether it comes from a black kid in a ghetto or a white one from Bel Air—it is a great leveler. In Nelson's best early work there's a cheery raucousness that can be, as they say, often

imitated but never duplicated. It probably comes through most clearly on "Believe What You Say" (1958). The song is no more (or less) than your standard paean to going steady, but in Nelson's hands it becomes a sublime example of late '50s jump. It's a rockabilly camp-meeting hymn, the sort of rouser a canny reverend saves to close the show. "I believe," Nelson sings, "you believe we believe / Believe pretty baby . . ." and we do believe.

The band, both then and later on, was tight and right. Jimmy Burton, Nelson's original lead guitarist, later became Elvis's lead guitarist, and subsequent Nelson sidemen (in the Stone Canyon Band) went on to play with such groups as the Byrds and the Eagles. It turned out that the kid wasn't a TV star after all: he was a musician. Maybe just as well.

The *Ozzie and Harriet Show* was canceled, and Ricky Nelson and Imperial came to a parting of the ways in the mid-'60s after a series of singles that performed jackadassically or not at all. Later singles released with Decca performed in the same spotty fashion (the most interesting Decca release was probably Nelson's cover of "I Got a Woman" in 1963). He was largely forgotten until the one-shot comeback hit "Garden Party" in 1972. He wrote it following an appearance at a Madison Square Garden oldies show where he was booed off the stage by an audience that appreciated neither his long hair nor his country-crossover style. In the wake of his death his manager remarked, "He never forgot those boos."

Nelson probably had more in common with Bob Dylan than with Elvis. Dylan was also booed off a stage in New York when he showed up in front of his shocked fans sporting an entirely different style (that stage was in Forest Hills rather than Madison Square Garden). Dylan also crossed over from rock to country, and, now that I think of it, Dylan never appeared on *Bandstand* either. You would think that beyond that, any relationship would end. But there's one more thing—a slightly eerie one.

In the years between "Garden Party" and his death by fire in a Texas field, Nel-

son performed and recorded steadily and unobtrusively. If he had private demons, they remained private. Unlike many rock and TV stars, he suffered neither explosive decompression or whiny depression when the TV show was canceled and the hits stopped coming. He simply went on rocking the best way he knew how, and like a good many others before him, he died on his way to a place where he could play some more. Not an MTV spectacular, mind you, nor a sold-out stadium, but merely a New Year's Eve gala in a Dallas hotel.

Now for the Dylan part, which I guess is also part of the reason I seem to miss Rick Nelson with such soreness. I think Nelson did discover soul somewhere along the way—he worked steadily to make himself better at his craft, and did so. In the mid-'70s he recorded a wonderful live album with the Stone Canyon Band, and one of those cuts is Nelson's version of Bob Dylan's "She Belongs to Me." Nelson's studio version was a modest country hit, peaking at number 32 or so. The live version is maybe the best cover of a Dylan song ever recorded, and what makes it eerie is that Rick Nelson actually sounds like Dylan did on his *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline* albums.

"She knows there's no success like failure," Nelson sings in Dylan's words, "and failure's no success at all." Maybe the force of Nelson's version comes from his understanding of both success and failure, maybe from mere experience, maybe a combination of the two. Whichever, it's honest work by an honest worker. On "Garden Party," Nelson speaks with some bitterness about fans unable or unwilling to allow change ("If old songs were all I played / I'd rather drive a truck"), but he also admits he was perfectly willing to say hello to his old girlfriend, that one Gene Pitney made up. What I'm trying to say is that he just rocked until God stopped him, and that's OK. So hello Mary Lou, and goodbye Rick. You were one of the good guys.

A conventionally handsome family portrait: (L-R) Ozzie, Harriet, David, and Ricky



the soundtrack
without a movie.

TOMMY KEENE
SONGS FROM THE FILM

featuring the single
"places that are gone"

here's what the critics had to say about
TOMMY KEENE'S PLACES THAT ARE GONE EP

"... an unbridled delight . . ."
-four-star review, *rolling stone*

no. 1 EP village voice
1984 pazz and jop critics poll

"keene's a melodist who's not afraid to lay
rubber—he tugs on the heartstrings in all
the right ways"
-the *boston globe*

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cassettes
produced by gaff american



Laura Levine

Article by Sue Cummings

Michael Gira has never been the interview subject of *Mistress Hazel* before. But there is a *first time for everything, slime*. No pain, no gain.

Time to beg your pitiful excuses, Mike. We'd come to expect the angry young-man trip from someone who went to art school, hung out at CBGB's hardcore matinees, and played with Glenn Branca—in that order. You and the other Swans aren't your usual lumbering, grating selves on these two new albums, *Greed* and *Holy Money*. You're finally learning to sing. Was it too much Ecstasy? Is this your avant-Muzak phase? Explain yourself, sniveling wimp.

"The new songs are more resolved because we've learned to make much more of our potential. You can only go on sounding like an empty thumping monolith for so long."

You've been at it for almost four years now, annoying us with your insufferable dirges. I'd say your potential is nil. Why else would audiences walk out on your gigs deaf from your unlistenable noise, disoriented, and thoroughly revolted at the stench of your pus-laden sweat?

"Actually they don't anymore. Now that we've gotten more attention, people come wanting to see that. We've gotten better, a lot more refined. More dynamics give space for the listener to enter, which is why sometimes live we can fall totally flat. It can just sound like a bland rendition, instead of having a dynamic build, which takes a lot of control."

I'd say you need discipline.

"We've been having a hell of a time in recent rehearsals, just to get the right inflection, the right feel, especially when we're playing slow, which we do a lot. It's just very difficult to get the right precision. None of it is improvisation. When you repeat a rhythm over and over, slight inflections and differences take place."

You arrogant, pretentious imbecile. At it again. I can't bear to watch you stroke yourself, wasting our time, boring us with your banal, self-indulgent experiments.

"Maybe we naively assume that people will become a little more adventurous, that through persistence more people will have the inclination to hear something that deals with the things our music deals with."

And what is "Self Interest (A Hanging)" about?

"It's presenting obscurely the frame of mind of someone hanging themselves to get sexual gratification. I just thought it was a pretty interesting state of mind—the length that someone would go to achieve pleasure, the point of death and ejaculation being so close together."

"I used to write a lot about direct physical violence from one person to another—one person absolutely taking over the identity and ego of another through physical brutality. Cop wasn't a denunciation of police per se, I was just interested in the dynamics of power."

You're obviously a menace to society. Your desires are perverted and debased. I'm certain in your deluded megalomaniacal fantasies you'd like nothing better than to have thousands of adoring young nymphets as your slaves. But your false modesty would never allow the Swans to be a mere pop band.

"I would love to be on the radio. I have nothing against success whatsoever. The only problem, of course, is whether you do it on your own terms or make huge concessions. If we wanted to become a completely commercial band we could, but it would have nothing to do with Swans."

You spineless, blubbering liar! I should lock you in the closet in Madonna's bra and panties until you've learned a lesson. You're obviously headed for the gutter—complete, degrading obscurity. Are you making a living?

"That doesn't matter."

Are the Swans supporting you?

"It is and it will. We are making some concessions with dance music, the 'Time Is Money' 12 inch, but I find that interesting—dealing with that rhythmic structure, seeing how far we can break it down."

Your pseudointellectual drivel makes me gag. How can you presume your tiring funeral marches will strip rock to its primal impulse, arouse listeners from their lull of passive semiconsciousness, renew the promise of Pete Townshend's power chords?

"I'm not saying our music's totally un-thought-out and spontaneous, that we just sit down, come up with riffs, and decide to jam out. It is calculated. The thing I concentrate on the most is the direct transmission of feeling. Maybe the means we use are calculated, maybe that's why it comes off that way. The attitude behind the music is sex and beat, which is what I like about rock."

"I think you could say that our music is rock in the real sense of the word. It's more rock than Twisted Sister,

which is just a cartoon. But real rock, like the Stooges, for instance, I'd see a similarity with. Not necessarily in sound, but in the grunt."

I'll teach you to grunt! You and your lackeys in the press's underbelly have whined about this "brave new sound" for years now. Well, are they playing it at skating rinks? Is radio playing it for album-side music-marathon weekends? How can you change the world, dog, if nobody wants to know?

"I guess I just don't want to hear the same things I've always heard. I'm curious. I want to make something that sounds different, that opens up a different level. I guess in that sense it's a little more intellectual. A traditional blues singer or even a lot of rock bands, some of whom are good, are satisfied with doing the same chords with a different singer or something. I just don't want to do that. It's not any big deal."

"My songs don't really set out to describe something or tell a story. I sit down and write words that hover around an ambivalent feeling, usually a series of things that negate themselves, an ambivalent sort of negation."

That's much better.

"For instance, 'Time Is Money' is basically about raping a boss. The idea was to invert it so that the power was reversed."

Silence, heel-sucker. You bore me. I'm the boss, I'm in charge. Tell me your excuse for a joke. Amuse me. "Well, 'A Screw' has an image of stuffing money in someone's mouth. The words in juxtaposition to the beat are interesting, cynically funny."

Out with it.

"Keep your head on the ground"

Stick your ass up

Move around

Cry

Open your mouth

Here's your money

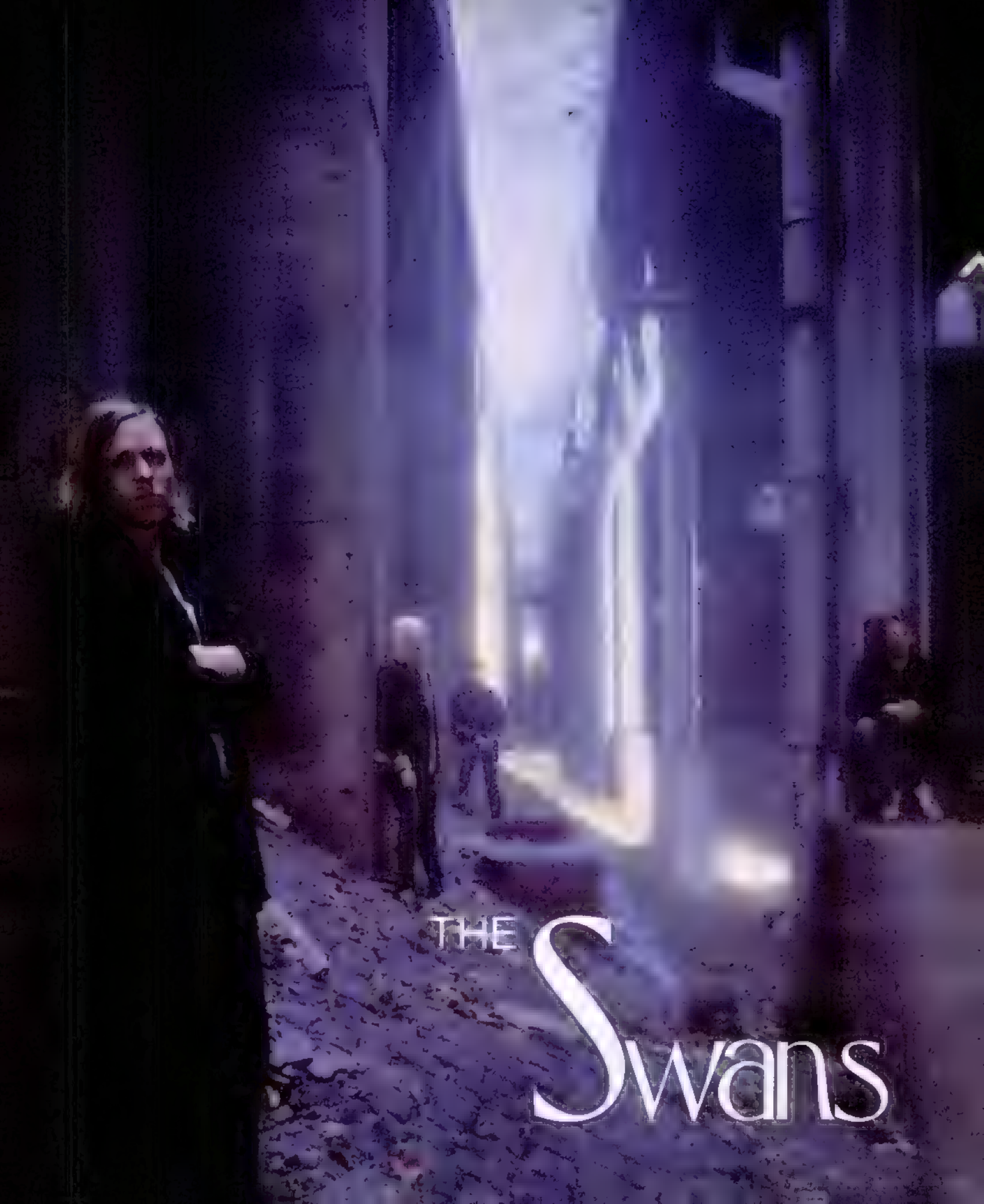
Holy money

Holy money

Holy money."

That reminds me. Your time is up. That will be \$120 for one hour. Fetch!

Above, clockwise from top left: Ivan Nahem, Norman Westberg, Harry Crosby, Ronaldo Gonzalez, Michael Gira, Al Kisyx. Not shown: Jarboe and Ted Parsons



THE
Swans



The Peachtree Fuzzy Navel.

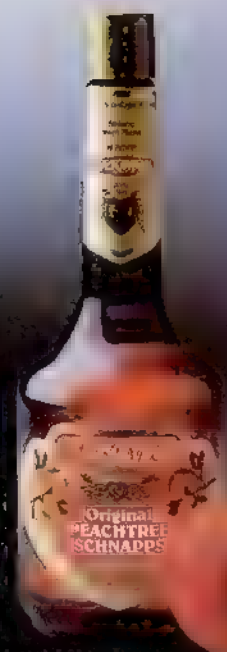
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Simon Clegg

SCOTS ON THE ROCKS

Musicians from Glasgow all have one thing in common.
They want out. Article by Jessica Berens

There is nothing romantic about Glasgow. When you mention the place to people in the south of England, they recoil. Tourists visit Edinburgh, Scotland's capital, with its nice, safe, intensely historical castle overlooking innumerable twee shops selling shortbread in tartan-motif tins. Glasgow, only 45 miles away, is Edinburgh's ugly sister. She has been an urban scapegoat for decades. "I have seen human degradation in some of the worst places both in England and abroad," declared an 1839 report on housing to Parliament. "But I did not believe until I had visited Glasgow that so large an amount of crime, misery, and disease existed in one spot in any civilized country."

The city center is, in fact, very beautiful, offering one of the best examples of Victorian architecture in the United Kingdom. But it is skirted by housing estates — massive concrete conglomerates whose communities have no shops, no flowers, no swings, and no defining characteristics except graffiti. Built as a solution to the slums, they are the problem now. The misery is exacerbated by damp, disease, boredom, overcrowding, and long-term unemployment stretching over two generations. Some ice cream vans in Glasgow were caught sell-

ing £10 bags of heroin stashed inside ice cream cones. This is not lemon popsicle territory.

Over the last few years the number of bands emerging from Glasgow and its environs has been uncanny: Simple Minds, Lloyd Cole and the Communications, the Waterboys, Jesus and Mary Chain, Aztec Camera, Orange Juice, Altered Images, Jimmy Somerville (first of Bronski Beat, now of the Communards), the Bluebelts, Blue Nile, Strawberry Switchblade, Midge Ure, the Associates, and the Armoury Show have already made their marks on the music scene. Following in their wake come Big Dish; Wet, Wet, Wet, the Floor; Goodbye Mr. McKenzie; Kick Reaction; the Snakes of Shake, W!N; the Jazzeteers; the Primevals; the Shop Assistants; and Oh God. Influences range from Burt Bacharach and Marc Bolan to Stax-Volt.

To put all this activity into perspective, it helps to remember how tiny England is compared to New York State, for example, and that Scotland makes up less than a third of it. People in Texas undoubtedly have gardens as large as Glasgow.

This musical mushrooming is so pronounced that a group (governmental, not musical) named Glasgow Action, under the umbrella of the Scottish Development Agency, is looking for ways to keep

the music industry business up north rather than allowing it to filter to London, where all the major record companies are based. Hear Iwan Williams, project executive of the SDA: "I grew up in Liverpool in the '60s, and that was extraordinary. What is happening here is extraordinary as well, although it's not as innocent as it was then. Another difference is that a lot of people who played in groups in the '60s went off and got straight jobs when they got tired of it. That option is not open here."

Three phenomena have had reverberating effects on the Scottish music scene. The punk explosion of 1977 prompted the world and his wife to pick up guitars, just as they had grabbed washboards in the skiffle era 20 years before. Out of punk rose the second phenomenon, Simple Minds (formerly Johnny and the Self Abusers), who pulled themselves out of the Gorbals, Glasgow's most notorious slum, and are now a worldwide commodity thanks to million-selling albums like *Sparkle in the Rain* and *Once Upon a Time*. Although most Glaswegian musicians are loath to admit musical influence from "the Minds," some have taken courage from the idea that if the boys next door can do it, well, . . . "It shows what you can do





Simple Minds' Jim Kerr casts a shadowy figure across the Glasgow scene

if you persevere," says Kick Reaction's Stuart Thorn. Third, there was the success of the Postcard label in 1980, an independent, Glasgow-based record company that blessed us with the likes of Orange Juice and Aztec Camera and managed to direct the eyes of the business at last, to Scotland's music scene.

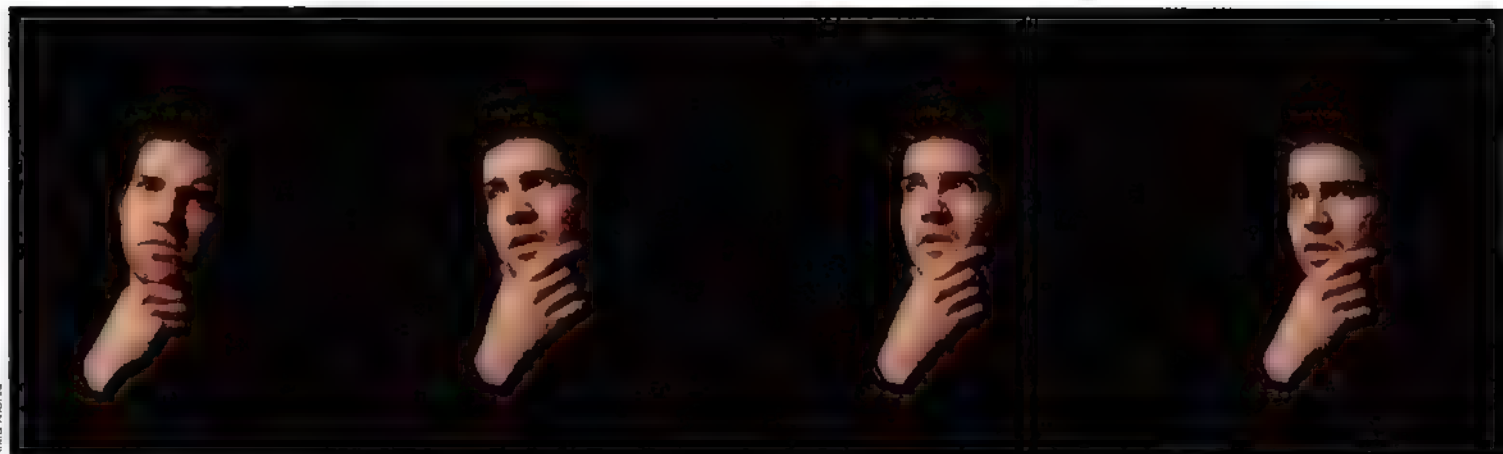
Postcard has since folded, but, says Elliott Davis, "It had a huge effect on Glasgow. The influence it had in terms of music is astonishing. Everyone who picked up a guitar was suddenly into the Byrds and the Velvet Underground." Davis, a tiny, bespectacled Glaswegian who looks as if he might have been bullied on the playground, is a kind of Berry Gordy figure hoping to do for his hometown what Gordy did for Detroit by launching Motown. Davis's Precious Organisation has five bands on its books, and he is determined that the financial and creative side effects of their success when and if it arrives will benefit Scotland and not England.

It is odd that Scottish teenagers should be so involved with a West Coast folk-rock group and a New York underground band, both of whose musical careers peaked two decades ago. But then, according to Kelly of Goodbye Mr. McKenzie, "Bands here are obsessed by America." Why? "Because," says Lloyd Cole's manager, Derek MacKillop, "So many Scots go out and make it there." Cole himself has often been accused of being obsessed with America. His voice is very similar to Joe Raposo, the Commotions' jangling guitar sound owes much to the Byrds, his lyrical touch is reminiscent of early Dylan, his favorite author is Joan Didion, and the only reason he didn't see *Rangers of the Lost Ark* is he's petrified of snakes.

The Sub-Club, 2.30 AM. Club owner Graham Wilson let me in free. He had already heard I was in town to interview Glasgow's latest musical triumph, Lloyd Cole. Cole's debut album, *Rattlesnakes*, was exalted by even the snidest critics and spawned the hit "Perfect Skin," featuring charismatic vocals over rugged, addictive riffs.

Wilson's dive, about the same size as a ghetto blaster, was crowded. The dance floor heaved with women who obviously read too many fashion magazines, and you couldn't get to the coat check for the haircuts. The Talking Heads' "Road to Nowhere" played; somebody informed me that David Byrne was born in Dumbarton, near Glasgow, and that there is a real road to nowhere in the city. They started to build an overpass and then ran out of money.

Glaswegians love to chat, and they were doing it nonstop at the Sub-Club, pressed against each other, their faces flushed. They all looked as if they had



known each other for years. Mark Reyce, who plays guitar with Big Dish, pressed white wines into my fist, and Derek Mac Killop's girlfriend befriended me. I told her I was nervous about meeting Lloyd Cole the next day. "He's very shy," she advised. I was all ears. Cole's girlfriend, she informed me, worked on the local newspaper. I mentioned that I found Joan Didion unreadable. "Yes," she sighed, "I know." Does he laugh about people dying, I inquired. "Yes," she said, "He has a sick sense of humor, but ask him who the people are in his songs."

Who are the people in your songs? Lloyd Cole sat drinking Beck's beer in Nico's, Glasgow's most self-consciously fashionable wine bar, which is tricked out in ornamental tiles and gilt. I had picked him up from the rehearsal studio where he and the band had been attempting, unsuccessfully, to play their UK hit "Lost Weekend." Wearing his charisma like a jersey that shrank in the wash, he is a streamlined teen idol with scowling eyebrows, slate-eyed stare, and baby-faced moodiness. Perhaps aware that a wad of hagiographical press cuttings allude to the fact that he is well read, Cole mentioned Dostoevsky, Beckett, and Cervantes within 15 minutes of the conversation's start. "It's difficult after you have read someone like Cervantes to see any wit or merit in pop music, so you do tend to apply higher standards to yourself." As he spoke, a girl walked by several times, hoping to be noticed; clusters of local musicians approached to pay their respects.

Cole, who studied English literature at Glasgow University, takes meticulous care with his lyrics.

"The characters are fictitious. I would like my lyrics to work like short stories or scenario photographs. I like the idea that they're very specific. Jesus... He comes up a lot. I use real characters as an alternative to long strings of adjectives. If you put Jesus in a song, it's a lot easier than having to build up another character. Cary Grant should definitely be in a few of the songs, because everybody knows his character inside out. Cary Grant and Jesus have a lot in common. They're both archetypal good guys."

So what of America? He loved R E M, he said, but planned to get rid of his Meat Puppets album as soon as possible. His feelings for the United States are mixed, stirred firmly by the fact that he was horrified by Cars leader Ric Ocasek's remix of *Rattlesnakes*, Cole and the Commotions' debut record, for the American listener. "In my opinion the American LP is worse than the British LP, and I didn't like that at all. I was very upset and seriously considered leaving the band." That said, he is still attracted to America, but "There's too much concern on the individual there, too much emphasis on making it yourself. People tend to forget about the major issues, like are their taxes going toward welfare or defense." A pause. "And any

"Bands here are obsessed by America." Why? "Because so many Scots go out and make it there."

country with no even vaguely socialist party is very strange."

Born in Derbyshire, Cole came to Scotland with his parents when they moved there to manage a golf club. His enthusiasm for Glasgow is underwhelming, and he is moving to London this year. "If you live a life like mine, with short bursts of time off that you want to make the most of, Glasgow can be very depressing. I'm sick of having nothing to do on a Sunday afternoon."

Glaswegian musicians are generally marked by a disaffection for their hometown. Take Jim Kerr, lead singer of Simple Minds. "People make too much of where a group comes from," he told one British pop paper. "They expect us to be so very Scottish, very patriotic and proud of our roots. Because we come from Glasgow, they expect us to be even more like that." To another paper he said, "I don't really enjoy playing Glasgow." Yet another report told of an argument Kerr had with Richard Jobson, the brainpower behind the Armoury Show, a rising local band. "He said we were betraying our heritage by playing funk and European music, that we should be getting a young sound of Scotland going."

Misgivings or not, Kerr bought his mother a huge house on Glasgow's south side, then recently moved with his wife, Chrissie Hynde, to a home outside Edinburgh. It is, however, a poignant fact that when he had difficulty writing the sequel to *New Gold Dreams*, he returned to the deserted shipyards and echoing factories around Glasgow's River Clyde to write one of his best songs, the powerful and memorable "Waterfront."

The near-universal anti-Glasgow attitude might have something to do with the fact that many of these musicians have been forced to move away from their hometown to land the necessary record deal. Despite the fact that major record companies here talent scout to haunt Glasgow's clubs and that they receive more demo tapes from here than anywhere else, London is still the center of the industry.

Jesus and Mary Chain, who play miasmic and hypnotic '60s-styled pop songs from behind a wall of feedback, hail from the hideous Glaswegian suburb of East Kilbride, and they share Kerr's lack of regard for the city. They were forced to play their first live concert

in London because at home "we got the closed door wherever we went." From behind a haircut shaped like something running especially wild in the Australian outback, singer William Reid explains, "It disappointed us a hell of a lot, because we were just starting out as a group. You want to play in front of people and all those horrible assholes just said, 'No, you're not good enough.'"

But even Jesus and Mary Chain's aggression is abstract and non-directed, distinguished by minimalist lyrics like "I'm in love with myself. There's no one else but me." Like the other Glasgow bands, they're interested in getting up and getting out, not sticking around long enough to complain seriously. Unlike most of the other local groups, they have a distinctive image; the current trend among Glaswegian bands is a disinclination to dress up. Image is unimportant, the theory goes; anyway, money's too tight, and it's the music that counts.

Unemployed for five years, Reid gave up his job because "I saw no future in it. I was doing the same things day in and day out. At the weekend I would go to the pub and get drunk. On Monday morning I would walk in with a hangover and start the whole week over again for £40. I was a sheet-metal worker. When I packed it in, everybody thought I was insane. But I saw the sense in it."

Bands like Lloyd Cole and the Commotions could not be farther away from the rebel yell if they were doing Abba covers. The same is true of the lesser known bands, such as Goodbye Mr. McKenzie. They write clean, Bowie-flavored pop songs about "the way people relate to each other and how that affects society in general," says Kelly. "We are not a political band." Kelly and fellow band member Martin Metcalf grew up in the old Scottish mining town of Bathgate. "There's three kebab shops and a chip shop offering full employment," says Kelly. "You see so many people that are 20 kicking 40. They fall out of the pub at 11 o'clock. We're looked on as oddities when we go back there because we aren't doing what they're doing. But when we played there they were really into it. They were probably living through us a little bit."

One might expect a generation with few options to transfer some frustration onto their creative output, but Glasgow's new music is surprisingly unabrasive, carefully crafted, and lyrically uncontroversial. Wet, Wet, Wet ("I'm gonna love ya, I'm gonna squeeze ya") are the Precious Organisation's blue-eyed-soul hope, and Elliott Davis predicts they will not be the last soul band to emerge from north of the border. Soul music is the sound of the street. "Rich people," says Davis. "Can't dance."

Glasgow's Lloyd Cole: thoughtful, well read, unassuming, thrifty, reverent, cheerful, and brave

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SPIN

UPDATE

These are a few of the people covered in the first 11 issues of SPIN. Some had not been written about before—and haven't been since. Others went on to become big stars.

In the year since she was on the cover of our premiere issue, Madonna shot to the top of the pop charts, but only made it to No. 3 on Mr. Blackwell's list of the world's 10 worst dressed women.

John McEnroe and Tatum O'Neal were just a couple when we wrote about them back in June, now they're about to become a threesome.

Sonic Youth, who made *Kill Your Idols*, is thinking of titling its next album *Madonna, Sean, and Me*.

Talking Head David Byrne went to Texas to direct *True Stories*, his first feature movie, for which the band is doing the sound track; Jerry Harrison went to Milwaukee, where he produced records by the Violent Femmes, Elliott Murphy, and his own solo album; and Chris and Tina are in the Bahamas, working on a new Tom Tom Club LP.

"Weirdo mutant artist" John Trubee, who confessed in our first issue that he wants to kill all the "minny tormentors" of his life by "strangling them until their eyes bug out and then kicking them down a flight of stairs," and who for years has performed and recorded his homicidal music with his band the Ugly Janitors of America, is by all accounts still working in a hardware store and occasionally writing for SPIN.

The Replacements, who according to the May '85 issue would be the next big thing, have been replaced by Jesus and Mary Chain (November '85).

U2 (May 1985) has conquered the world, ended hunger, reunited Ireland, and met God.

The Fat Boys (with some help from Refrigerator Perry) made fat fashionable, got on *Miami Vice*, and are making the first of a three-picture deal in which they play "The Fat Stooges."

After he and D.M.C. produced the ideal fusion of disco and AC/DC, Run suffered a collapsed lung.

Fela, a political prisoner and the king of Afro-beat, is still in jail in Nigeria, but is hoped to be released soon.

Touré Kunda still plays happy dance music heard on better party tapes everywhere.

Bronski Beat broke up.

The Beastie Boys, whose manager was thrown out of his New York University dorm, were banned from their record company's offices.

Leonard Cohen, still singing the same sad song, made *Miami Vice*.

Frankie Goes to Hollywood now opens shows for the Bay City Rovers.

D. Boon of the Minutemen died in a car crash en route to becoming the next big thing.

Sting was tragically killed by his ego, which ate him alive. He was 31.

The Pogues, the Clancy Brothers of punk, will tour the U.S.!

The Golden Palominos could possibly be the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Annie Lennox is probably no longer a vegetarian. Mötley Crüe's cover of "Helter Skelter" proves what a great heavy-metal band the Beatles were.

Supermodel Renée Simonsen got engaged to John

Taylor, Simon LeBon married model Yasmin Parvaneh, and Brooke Shields left Michael Jackson so she could leave Wham!'s George Michaels.

Bob Geldof, whose Boomtown Rats were dropped by their record company, may be starving for publicity.

David Crosby, who violated his bond after walking away from a detox program in Texas, chose state prison, where he can play his guitar, over county jail,

where musical instruments are banned.

Ike Turner, who promised a comeback, kept his word when he was busted recently on cocaine possession.

Sly Stone also promised a comeback and kept his word too, which means not keeping either his word or his appointments.

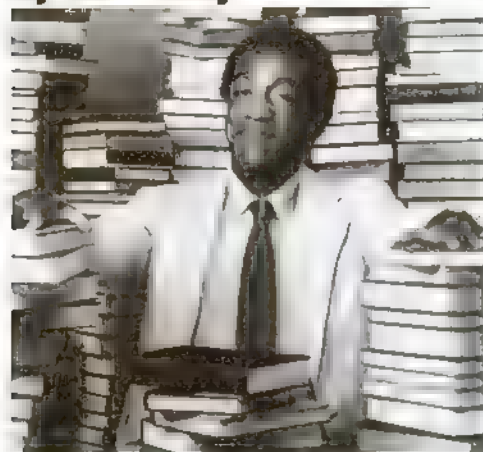
After appearing on our November cover, Bruce Springsteen went on to become the biggest thing. ☺



Chris Carol

How to read faster

By Bill Cosby



International Paper asked Bill Cosby—who earned his doctorate in education and has been involved in projects which help people learn to read faster—to share what he's learned about reading more in less time.

When I was a kid in Philadelphia, I must have read every comic book ever published. (There were fewer of them then than there are now.)

I zipped through all of them in a couple of days, then reread the good ones until the next issues arrived.

Yes indeed, when I was a kid, the reading game was a snap.

But as I got older, my eyeballs must have slowed down or something! I mean, comic books started to pile up faster than my brother Russell and I could read them!

It wasn't until much later, when I was getting my doctorate, I realized it wasn't my eyeballs that were to blame. Thank goodness. They're still moving as well as ever.

The problem is, there's too much to read these days, and too little time to read every word of it.

Now, mind you, I still read comic books. In addition to contracts, novels, and newspapers. Screenplays, tax returns and correspondence. Even textbooks about how people read. And which techniques help people read more in less time.

I'll let you in on a little secret. There are hundreds of techniques you could learn to help you read

faster. But I know of 3 that are especially good.

And if I can learn them, so can you—and you can put them to use *immediately*.

They are commonsense, practical ways to get the meaning from printed words quickly and efficiently. So you'll have time to enjoy your comic books, have a good laugh with Mark Twain or a good cry with *War and Peace*. Ready?

Okay. The first two ways can help you get through tons of reading material—fast—without reading every word.

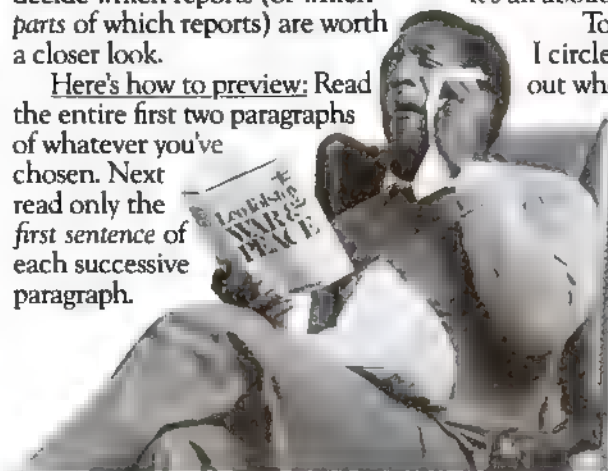
They'll give you the overall meaning of what you're reading. And let you cut out an awful lot of unnecessary reading.

1. Preview—if it's long and hard

Previewing is especially useful for getting a general idea of heavy reading like long magazine or newspaper articles, business reports, and nonfiction books.

It can give you as much as half the comprehension in as little as one tenth the time. For example, you should be able to preview eight or ten 100-page reports in an hour. After previewing, you'll be able to decide which reports (or which parts of which reports) are worth a closer look.

Here's how to preview: Read the entire first two paragraphs of whatever you've chosen. Next read only the first sentence of each successive paragraph.



"Learn to read faster and you'll have time for a good laugh with Mark Twain—and a good cry with *War and Peace*."

Then read the entire last two paragraphs.

Previewing doesn't give you all the details. But it does keep you from spending time on things you don't really want—or need—to read.

Notice that previewing gives you a quick, overall view of long, unfamiliar material. For short, light reading, there's a better technique.

2. Skim—if it's short and simple

Skimming is a good way to get a general idea of light reading—like popular magazines or the sports and entertainment sections of the paper.

You should be able to skim a weekly popular magazine or the second section of your daily paper in less than half the time it takes you to read it now.

Skimming is also a great way to review material you've read before.

Here's how to skim: Think of your eyes as magnets. Force them to move fast. Sweep them across each and every line of type. Pick up only a few key words in each line.

Everybody skims differently.

You and I may not pick up exactly the same words when we skim the same piece, but we'll both get a pretty similar idea of what it's all about.

To show you how it works, I circled the words I picked out when I skimmed the following story. Try it. It shouldn't take you more than 10 seconds.

My brother Russell thinks monsters live in our bedroom closet at night. But I told him he is crazy.

"Go and check then," he said.

I didn't want to.

Russell said I was chicken.

"Am not," I said.

"Are so," he said.

So I told him the monsters were going to eat him at midnight.

He started to cry. My Dad came in and told the monsters to beat it.

Then he told us to go to sleep.

"If I hear any more about monsters," he said, "I'll spank you."

We went to sleep fast. And you know something? They never did come back.

Skimming can give you a very good idea of this story in about half



"Read with a good light—and with as few friends as possible to help you out. No TV, no music. It'll help you concentrate better—and read faster."

the words—and in less than half the time it'd take to read every word.

So far, you've seen that previewing and skimming can give you a general idea about content—fast. But neither technique can promise more than 50 percent comprehension, because you aren't reading all the words. (Nobody gets something for nothing in the reading game.)

To read faster and understand most—if not all—of what you read, you need to know a third technique.

3. Cluster—to increase speed and comprehension

Most of us learned to read by looking at each word in a sentence—one at a time.

Like this:

My—brother—Russell—thinks—monsters...

You probably still read this way sometimes, especially when the words are difficult. Or when the words have an extra-special meaning—as in a poem, a Shakespearean

play, or a contract. And that's O.K.

But word-by-word reading is a rotten way to read faster. It actually cuts down on your speed.

Clustering trains you to look at groups of words instead of one at a time—to increase your speed enormously. For most of us, clustering is a totally different way of seeing what we read.

Here's how to cluster: Train your eyes to see all the words in clusters of up to 3 or 4 words at a glance.

Here's how I'd cluster the story we just skimmed:

My brother Russell thinks monsters live in our bedroom closet at night.

But I told him he is crazy.

"Go and check then," he said.

I didn't want to. Russell said

I was chicken.

"Am not," I said.

"Are so," he said.

So I told him the monsters were going to eat him at midnight.

He started to cry. My Dad came in and told the monsters to beat it.

Then he told us to go to sleep.

"If I hear any more about monsters," he said, "I'll spank you."

We went to sleep fast. And you know something? They never did

come back.

Learning to read clusters is not something your eyes do naturally. It takes constant practice.

Here's how to go about it: Pick something light to read. Read it as fast as you can. Concentrate on seeing 3 to 4 words at once rather than one word at a time. Then reread

"Preview, skim, and cluster to read faster—except the things you want to read word for word."



the piece at your normal speed to see what you missed the first time.

Try a second piece. First cluster, then reread to see what you missed in this one.

When you can read in clusters without missing much the first time, your speed has increased. Practice 15 minutes every day and you might pick up the technique in a week or so. (But don't be disappointed if it takes longer. Clustering everything takes time and practice.)

So now you have 3 ways to help you read faster. Preview to cut down on unnecessary heavy reading. Skim to get a quick, general idea of light reading. And cluster to increase your speed and comprehension.

With enough practice, you'll be able to handle more reading at school or work—and at home—in less time. You should even have enough time to read your favorite comic books—and *War and Peace*!

Bill Costin

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ANDY GILL NME

"...Among the best rock LPs from England in years: a hauntingly personal and powerful work that speaks with the urgency and heart of musicians who take too much pride in what they do to simply join the cold, commercial calculation of most recent British rock!"

ROBERT HILBURN LOS ANGELES TIMES

"Live with it for a bit and you'll either declare it a classic or sling it out with the bathwater. I haven't decided yet!"

ADAM SWEETING MELODY MAKER

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WILLIAM SHAW SMASH HITS

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THE FACE

"An innocent little sugar cube, just waiting for a tongue!"

ANDY GILL NME

PSYCHOCANDY

THE ALBUM FROM THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN



SPINS

Edited by Rudy Langlais
and Richard Gehr

Fine Young Cannibals,
Public Image Ltd., Feargal
Sharkey, LL Cool J,
Mantronix, John Trubee,
Woodstock 1985,
Minutemen, Tony Williams,
James Newton, Johnny
Copeland, Black Sabbath,
St. Vitus



Peter Anderson

Platter du Jour

Fine Young Cannibals *Fine Young Cannibals* I.R.S.

It's like the difference between the languages (American and British English, that is). A different accent; a different slant. The difference between *caan't* and *can't*. Take R&B, for instance. In the U.S., that stands for good ol' rhythm and blues. But there's a new drift to the new blues wave washing over from England. According to this three-man band (Roland Gift, vocals, and ex-English Beats Andy Cox, guitar, and David Steele, bass) called Fine Young Cannibals, R&B seems to stand for rock 'n' breezy, a sort of busy bluesy sound. For short, I'm calling it R&BZ, the newsiest Brit-blues.

The core of Fine Young Cannibals' sound hinges on a laid-down basic beat, lotsa horns, and best of all, the vocals of Roland Gift, this new-sung bloomer, who believes in *dancin'* on the dock of the bay. OK, so he doesn't reach deep like Otis, but that's just the point. Like, lighten up the load. Gift's phrasing makes the lyrics sound as if they're coming from four different parts of his mouth. Quadrophonic lips, so to speak. His is a stylized garbling that twists and turns into his own enunciations (at will), a nice rounded tone with a rough

cutting edge. Sigh.

"Johnny Come Home" is the single, an easy skittish ska-ish tune with an underlying urgency. Jazzy muted trumpet solo bops along with solid guitar. Plus Gift's instrument of a voice. Dada . . . dadada . . . is gonna stick (splatt!) like glue to your brain as you find yourself hummin' the refrain. "Couldn't Care More" (a nice touch in this age of the infamous "couldn't care less" attitude) exudes a '60s soooooo via Muscle Shoals with an organ cushion underneath. Jenny Jones supplies the oooh, oooooooooohh . . . oooh . . . ooowwww howls. This is your English soul, without excesses of "cool" beating the heat down. Soulful drivin' in the slooow lane. Hunger without the food stamp deprivation/starvation factor. "Don't Ask Me to Choose" has more upbeat driving guitar, the trumpet is now unmuted, and though not too taxing a sound, it's a great club beat.

Though "Funny How Love Is," with its samba-like ease screams to be an overlay to a clip from the '50s film *Black Orpheus* (those sunny, lazy scenes), this song contains my favorite lyric on the album: "We're not together . . . but I'm still alive." Being clear-eyed about love without being cynical ain't easy. The tenor sax is moody, the acoustic guitar easy, and the whole song is pretty without being flimsy. "Blue," the song, and blue, the word, roll around in Roland Gift's mouth, as if going through a sideshow, through countless changes, and sometimes coming out seven letters long. Then you've got those clear, high, lovely horns (credit should be given here to Graeme Hamilton on trumpet and Martin Parry on drums).

The lyrical content on most cuts isn't terribly complicated, one thought turned around a few times (all songs save for "Suspicious Minds" . . . why did they bother with that one?? . . . written by a combo of two or three band members); but the sparseness lays snug next to the inlays and wrap-arounds of Gift's voice, along with the more than competent instrumental work, forever keeping the vocals buoyed up. Upbeat cuts like "Move to Work," "On a Promise," and "Time Isn't Kind" are a new breed, a varied speed of energy, a step down from previous British madness, but retaining the content of the best of the English beat.

The 2-tone English "look" to music (white rock spliced with reggae) seems to have shifted to another blend. This British accent is laced with blues, not of the early Stones or Animals variety, and without the new wave hype, The Fine Young Cannibals seem ready to rake Muscle Shoals over the coals.

P.S. You only hafta hear the cut "Like a Stranger" (replete with whooop-eee cushion chorus of Beverley, Gloria, and Maxine Brown) repeating over and over and over "I've been too long in an institution!!!" to realize that these children should be spelling their name . . . the Fahn Young Cannibals!

—Annie Russo

Where soul meets the Beat: (l. R.) Roland Gift, a lead singer who can actually sing, with former English Beat members Andy Cox and David Steele

album

Public Image Ltd.

Album
Elektra

RADIO VERSION

(Reading time: 2 seconds)

You can judge a record by its cover.

DISCO VERSION

(Reading time: 2 minutes)

John Lydon, after all, *did* give SPIN its most incisive (and better yet, succinct) interview to date (January, p. 14). Which is why I regret having to report that this schizophrenic little project is dismayingly annoying—in all the wrong ways. Lydon himself seems as generically malignant, snotty, and angry a performing tumor as we ever knew him to be. His voice verily spews forth each iota of peevish boo-hoo-hoo-ism our modern malaise is capable of eliciting, as conveyed in the final syllable of almost every word he sings, sort of like this: "People-uh who need people-uh / Are the stupidest-uh people-uh."

You wouldn't believe how hard it is to carp against his cheerless sloganeering (I despise fair-weather friends and wish you'd all just "crawl back into your dustbin" as much as the next misanthrope), but he makes me do it. From the choice of a California supermarket chain's generic packaging style, Lydon—ironically or otherwise—once again postulates the mere primacy of product. In fact, *Album's* cover contains no information (so clip and save this review for reference when you buy this record—and face it, you undoubtedly will) as to producer (Bill Laswell) and backing musicians (including drummers Ginger Baker and Tony Williams, guitarists Nicky Skopelitis and Steve Vai, violinist L. Shankar, bassist B. Laswell, and keyboardist Ryuichi Sakamoto).

What irks me is the manner in which Laswell's classic notion of what a hard rock album *should* sound like, when paired off with Lydon's vehement protests, sounds suspiciously sterile and makes me think boring thoughts concerning who was possibly using whom here. Laswell's music is anything but apocalyptic; it's Aerosmith as played by the finest sessionmen in the country and bespeaks quality and craftsmanship and all those other nice attributes.

OK, granted *Album* has its moments. Let me suggest a couple: "Rise" ("I could be wrong / I could be right / I could be black / I could be white"—who writes this stuff?) has a not unpleasant South African township lope to it. "Ease" features a fake Middle Eastern sound that brings

to mind Eno/Bowie's tourism in that neck of the geopolitical sphere. And former Zappa guitarist Steve Vai here flexes his musical muscles all over the place, if that sort of thing appeals to you.

GENERIC CONCLUDING QUIP

All in all, though, *Album's* one bitter placebo of a PiL to swallow

—Richard Gehr

Above: John Rotten/Lydon: He will give no interview before its time.



Andrew Collins



Bladys/Buchler

Feargal Sharkey
Feargal Sharkey
A & M

"A Good Heart," the opening cut, has a clear, urgent beat that should give Feargal Sharkey a big radio hit and a one-way ticket back to England. A strong, distinct voice and musical savvy could make anyone a vinyl hero, but the skills of the Undertones' former lead singer are more grating than ingratiating. Sharkey's machine produces an insistent warble—his voice lacks shocks—and producer Dave Stewart drives it across a terrain of melodramatic shlock toward the rock equivalent of Vegas: Los Angeles.

Packaging a singer this odd requires a certain degree of Top-40 costuming, and Stewart is the Bob Mackie of producers. His familiar, eager imitation of any known style slips unavoidably into parody. But Sharkey is pretty crafty himself, using his rough stammer to force oily drivel such as "You Little Thief," "Ashes and Diamonds," and "Ghost Train." This is the sound of pure stress, not soul. Sharkey's flourishes undermine your trust, like Annie Lennox, he hypes in a hip tradition so that he sounds both sincere and phony. It's the Rod Stewart disease. This wasn't a problem when Sharkey recorded "Never Never" two years ago as part of Vince Clarke's *The Assembly*; he was understated, a bit monotonous, yet convincing. But on "You Little Thief" the line "There's no feeling at all" is belted so powerfully that shtick replaces irony. He's further shamed by the inane lyrics of "Someone to Somebody" ("I want to be someone to somebody / And that someone is you") and every slick guitar, horn, and harmonica solo.

Worst of all is "Made to Measure," a patented Chrissie Hynde composition that Sharkey phrases as though learning to squall. His lack of integrity is a disgrace to the recent outpouring of such visionary vocalists from England as Morrissey of the Smiths, Billy Mackenzie of the Associates, and Kevin Rowland of Dexys Midnight Runners, who match the idiosyncrasy of their emotions with their voices. Sharkey and Stewart's most original effort is a slo-mo version of "It's All Over Now." Is that a promise?

—Armond White

LL Cool J

Radio
Def Jam/Columbia

Mantronix

The Album
Sleeping Bag

Welcome to the future. Or at least 90 minutes of it.

In their own ways, LL Cool J and Mantronix represent the state of the art in hardcore hip hop. Unlike their funk-drenched pre-Run-D.M.C. forebears, these acts purge their sound of all outside influences. This is second- (third, fourth?) generation rap, after the genre has proven its ability to stand on its own. Rap cut down to the hip-hop bone: just words and a beat box. A very loud beat box. No female choruses, no human beat boxes, no "Good Times" riffs. Virtually no music. Three years ago, these records might have sounded as unprecedented and revolutionary as "Sucker M.C.'s"—or they might have sounded like unmusical shit. They probably wouldn't have been possible.

"Look girl, I'm not going to sing 'cause I just don't do that," says LL Cool J at the opening of "I Want You." And for the

remainder of the album, 17-year-old James Todd Smith from Hollis, Queens, is as good as his word. His approach gives the record a level of unity rare in rap albums. Listening to *Radio* is like hearing Run-D.M.C.'s debut album for the first time. The first thing you notice is that there's no bullshit. The second thing is that the lyrics actually make sense; they're intelligent, funny, and to the point. The third—and related—thing is that within its rigid focus, the album virtually defines a whole handful of songwriting styles and topics. LL rarely raps about rapping; he rarely raps about LL. His raps cut through to everyday adolescent situations. "Dear Yvette," a sexist abomination, is about the locker-room favorite ("Like Santa Claus said, you're a ho ho ho"). "Radio" is about blasting your box. In "That's a Lie," LL trades lines with his manager, Russell Simmons, who promises him a medallion so big it'll keep bullets off his back. "I Need a Beat," here Osterized by Jazzy Jay, is a self-reflexive rap ("Lacking a melody but still complete / Providing musical energy for the street"). But the eye-openers on the album are "I Want You" and "I Can Give You More," two straightforward rap love ballads that eschew hip-hop braggadocio to deal directly with that uncomfortable lump in

the pants. "I'm 16 and you're in college," he says in the former, "Come on sweet thing, please give me the knowledge."

Radio is Run-D.M.C. done better: smarter raps, better beats, harder sound. All this doesn't make it a superior record—but it does make it worth checking out.

The Album also has great beats. Amazing beats. Beat programmer Mantronix overlays electronic snare whumps with rubbery beat-box ticks and a syncopated bell to create a computerized answer to Ziggy Modeliste—you never know which accent is the big one or where it'll come down next. But as with the Meters, the lyrics are irrelevant, and when that's half of your act, you run into problems. Despite a wealth of sharp songs, *The Album* doesn't cohere as a record—rapper M.C. Tee never gives the thing an identity. This record isn't as mature or as intelligent as *Radio*. But as a collection of startlingly sophisticated rhythms, this is the state of the art. You can say it lacks substance—but if you do, you just don't appreciate the beat.

—John Leland

Below. LL Cool J, the man with the box that can rock the crowd.



Josh Cheuse



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The Minutemen 3-Way Tie (For Last) SST

Fate sucks. And this is not meant to be read in the Bob Christgau suck-is-good meaning of the word either. One week before this LP arrived at my house, the Minutemen's guitarist, D Boon, was robbed of his life in a conspiracy between fate and the broken axle of a van. And that's sad. And it sucks.

The last record the Minutemen did, the ill-mannered *Project: Mersh*, seemed a forward-moving continuation of the form-annihilation the band had undertaken with *Double Nickels on the Dime*, their springsprung opus from the end of '84. *Mersh* barreled way the heck "out there" (somewhere), making the band seem like San Pedro, California's branch of the Sun Ra Arkestra at one moment and the '85 version of Cream the next. It was not precisely clear where these boyos were headed, but they were no doubt very much in motion.

3-Way Tie has a different feel to it. With this disc, their eleventh, the Minutemen seem extremely interested in baring their roots with one hand, while painting leftist graffiti on melodic constructions a young Republican could love with the other.

To achieve the former, three covers are performed in a reverentially nonradical tip-o'-the-hat kinda way. They thank John Fogerty for inventing the rock populist stance with "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?" They thank Blue Oyster Cult for coming up with the "stun guitar" concept by doing "The Red and the Black." They thank the Urinals for being the original spuzzy post-Wire punks with "Ack Ack Ack."

Two other covers are included in the set: a fleshy take of the Meat Puppets' "Lost" and a stark run-through of Roky Erickson's "Bermuda," which bassist Mike Watt sings into a phone hooked up to a

The Minutemen: (l. r.) Mike Watt, the late D. Boon, and George Hurley. Their new LP contains their final studio tracks.



tape recorder. That pair, however, blend in pretty seamlessly with the home-wrought anthems also contained hereon. They're different from much of that pack primarily because they don't have a lot to say about the thriving state of imperialism today, a topic much in evidence elsewhere.

The four lyrics here that were written by Boon (most of the others are by former Black Flag bassist Kira Roessler) deal in express terms with topics such as Vietnam, Nicaragua, and "the men who die for glory." As purist anti-military-industrialist rant they are as forthright in intent as Phil Ochs's songs ever were. And if they aren't quite as archly funny as those words written by Ochs (America's last great topical songster), well, hell, they still rock like a fuckin' schooner. One of 'em in fact, "Courage," has about the most purely diggable-by-the-masses sonic attack the band ever mustered. During its two-and-a-half-minute life, Watt thunders along with a bass presence that recalls '67 Entwistle, George Hurley keeps his drumming simple and hotly emphatic, and Boon's guitar steams menacingly through a jungle of rusty hooks as his vocals describe the lonely death of a soldier who chose to serve. It's great.

Some will say this isn't a great album, and it may not be. Certainly it's not the Minutemen's greatest. But it is tons better than a lotta albums that've been called great and it intimates that the Minutemen were finally in a position to make (if they wanted to) the transition into the kinda band that a huge load of wet peeps could love. I dunno... I guess the point is academic. Suffice it to say that this is the Minutemen's penultimate statement (there'll likely be an LP of more recent material recorded live on R.E.M.'s mobile equipment during the Minutemen's last string of support dates) and as such it deserves your undivided attention.

If you never embraced this band, you might as well start here. Then you can spend the rest of your days kicking yourself for not jumpin' their bones while they still had a squirm in 'em.

Fate sucks. Fuck fascists.

—Byron Coley



St. Vitus Hallow's Victim SST

Black Sabbath Featuring Tony Iommi Seventh Star Warner Brothers

Last year Black Flag brought St. Vitus on tour with them. And look at the Necros. Skinheads cranking out thrash at the turn of the decade have had five years to hone their chops and grow their hair. As second-wave punks found their sound devolving, new groups such as SWA, Overkill, Venom, Megadeth, and Slayer, originating independently, were ripe for crossover. Hardcore's stylistic impasse has cleared the way for a seismic wave of gnarly underground metal. At the same time, such grandfathers as AC/DC, Black Sabbath, and Deep Purple (in various re-incarnations) are still making records.

The irony is that *Hallow's Victim* has as much to do with Black Sabbath as *Seventh Star*. St. Vitus in its worst moments at least keeps the faith. "White Stallions" is as melodramatically stupid about heroin addiction ("Tiny hoofprints on my arm / Strung out in a line") as "Sweet Leaf" was about pot. But present-day Sabbath—bland, AOR-generic—bears little resemblance to its namesake either in spirit or in the flesh.

Seventh Star was supposed to be Tony Iommi's first solo record: he's the only founding Sabbath member to play on it. With Ozzy, Geezer Butler, and Bill Ward a ready involved in other projects, it became clear that no one else would be using the name. In a brilliant stroke of marketing savvy, Eric Singer, Geoff Nichols, Dave Spitz, and Glenn Hughes (who once sang with Deep Purple) became Black Sabbath featuring Tony Iommi. Just like that, Warner is doing a brisk business with younger fans discovering the original Sabbath; nothing like brand recognition to sell 'em another.

The progressive keyboard mush of *Seventh Star*'s "No Stranger to Love" will probably lull radio listeners this spring, along with "Danger Zone," whose rhythm track coasts impotently beside its meandering guitar solo. "Turn to Stone" is the only song with balls, but it's pedestrian compared to the visceral bite of Vitus's "Hallow's Victim." Vitus's Scott Reagers sings "Prayer for the Masses" ("Pray for their asses"), a morbid warning against devil worship, with all the dumb charm of an Ozzy O. *Hallow's Victim*'s "Mystic Lady," with its octave-hopping guitar

solo, is a 7:47 roller coaster. I listen to this if you're a drugged-out teenager or just feel like one. But don't try to listen to the bass line, a dull thud buried way down in the mix. What *Seventh Star* lacks in material, *Hallow's Victim* lacks in production.

While Sabbath has stewed too long in its own juices and shriveled up, Vitus presents itself as a mildly retarded inbred child. Only a fool—or maybe someone who never saw the original Beastie Boys do "Iron Man"—wouldn't recognize '70s metal as the source of hardcore's accelerated, stripped-down crunch. On a faster song such as "Hallow's Victim," post-punk metal in turn owes a debt to hardcore. It's too easy to make this a contest of Young Turks vs. dinosaurs. Metal's primordial ooze was charged with frustration at the limits of blues and experimentation at the boundaries of psychedelia. Generations later, neither of these records takes chances. St. Vitus wins by virtue of its honesty, but it hardly matters

—Sue Cummings

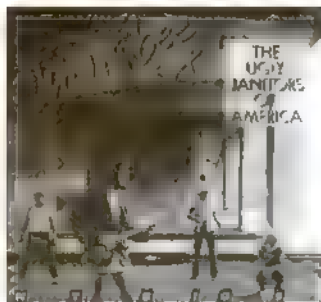


Johnny Copeland Bringin' It All Back Home Rounder

And then there's the one where the traveling blues scholar packs up all his grants and advances and goes off to Africa in search of the roots of the blues. But when he gets there, the locals don't know from blues, which is a big disappointment considering he's gonna go ahead and write about it all the same. Well, one evening he's in the middle of nowhere and needs a place to stay and so he knocks on this farmer's door...

You've heard that one? How about the one where the Texas bluesman tours Africa on one of those State Department deals and has some experiences and writes some songs—"Well, I been out in the jungle / But I ain't found no jungle at all"—and when he gets back, his little New England record company has this great idea: let's send him back. Let's send him back to make a record, and we'll call it *Roots III*. No, we'll call it *Bringin' It All Back Home*.

Well, Johnny Copeland's your journeyman Texas-style bluesman with lots of Texas-style mixed influences and a nice tight horn section, the kind of guy who can deliver one of the better evenings you've ever spent in a bar in your life and who makes records that are just basically pretty OK. This record's basically pretty OK too—nothing to write home from Ivory Coast about, but interesting



John Trubee and the Ugly Janitors of America

Naked Teenage Girls in Outer Space
Restless/Enigma

Various Artists

Woodstock 1985
Trigon

SPIN contributor John Trubee is a human blunderbuss who spews name-calling hyperbole in every direction—at everyone from “the vacuous girls who snubbed me years ago in high school” to “the agents of Satan who operate credit card companies,” as he tells the tale in “Leper in the Shadows.” I’m sure the critic who pans his second album is next in line. One of Trubee’s big complaints about the world is that he must suffer through “mindless menial employment” and

would rather live off his art as much as he lives for it. That’s one thing he probably has in common with many of his fellow participants on Marc Mylar’s *Woodstock 1985* compilation; another is that a lot of these West Coast left-fielders have played with Zoogz Rift and His Amazing Shitheads, a name that precludes any further explanation.

Trubee sprays poison pellets in so many directions that none of his targets ends up fatally wounded. Instead, unable to stalk any one quarry, he gets sucked into the vortex of his venom and becomes his own biggest victim. On the only two songs here with lyrics, he modulates from self-pitying pop balladry to accusatory anthem. “Field of Corpses” is the album’s attempt at pathos (“Lay me down / On a field filled with corpses”), while on “Leper” he goes after the high school girls and “everything that’s old and moldy and tired and grey.”

Music school grad that he is, Trubee does know his share of chromatic chords, and his taste for textural luxury—probably the only luxury he lets himself enjoy—enriches his three instrumentals. “Mental Illness Can Be Beautiful” employs brass to come up with a slightly fucked Defunkt sound. On “Enchanted Dance of the Humorous, Ill-Tempered Corporate Executives” Trubee doubles his own sinuous Strat line with the electric vibraphone of Richie Hass, and even a quarter tone apart they sound good together. “Naked Teenage Girls in Outer Space” is good-natured lysergic imita-

tion jazz. Neither oaf nor great composer, Trubee probably could have done more if he’d had more than two days’ studio time to tighten up the ensemble playing.

Trubee has one other talent worth mentioning. He torments strangers over the phone and records the results, building from supercilious civility to surreal grotesquerie with brain-damaged zest. The two examples included here pale beside the rabid lunacy of *Calls to Idiots*, a tape available from Trubee’s Space & Time Tapes (11438 Killion St. No. 4, N. Hollywood, CA 91601—probably his home address, so if you’re a sadistic murderer don’t read it). My editor played some of it for me and then turned it off because I was obviously enjoying it too much.

I can’t say the same of *Woodstock 1985*, though I do appreciate the tacky red rolling paper that fell out of the jacket. The two cuts by the Ugly Genitals of America (Genitals/Janitors, get it?) are not written by Trubee—and make him look like Burroughs by comparison. The blurry thrash of the Wounded Reagents’ “Diplomatic Immunity” is the only relief from a half-witted cavalcade of bad humor about farting (the Ghetto Blasters’ “Breakin’ Wind”), drugs (English 101’s “Crimson and Metamucil”), Laurie Anderson (A Flock of New York Conceptual Artists Without Work’s “O Sharkey’s Dog”), and Jews (Mensch’s “Matzo Balls to the Wall”). Feh.

—Mark Fleischmann



John Trubee and friend: a human blunderbuss spewing name-calling hyperbole in every direction



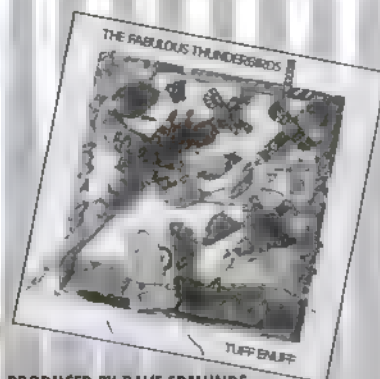
HOW FABULOUS ARE THEY?

The T-Birds are so Fabulous—they’ve become American legends with 18 years of butt-rockin’ music under their belts...sell-out headliners in theaters, clubs and juke joints throughout the U.S....chosen opening act on major tours by Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, Tam Petty And The Heartbreakers...ambassadors of pure Texas R&R to the world on five headline tours of Europe!

HOW TUFF ARE THEY?

“TUFF ENUFF.”

THEIR BEST ALBUM YET!



PRODUCED BY DAVE EDMUNDS,
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Even so, let's not kid ourselves. This is a blues record with a slick shtick, produced in an exotic clime with obliging locals lending—or leasing—a hand, and not a whole lot more. The African musicians here plainly know which side their bread is colonized on, and whether it's a Texas bluesman or Paul McCartney who pays them to play they're probably equally pleased to cash the check.

That's not to say they add nothing original, because this record has some moments of the most litig blues and rhythm you've ever heard. And it's nice to have it reaffirmed that white guys aren't the only ones capable of complete cultural insensitivity, because the most intriguing music here is "Djeli, Djeli"—get it, blues fans?—by Djeli Mousa, who plays his own composition on the kora, the gourd-harp of the griots... and which is cracked right along its spine and split in two, with a minute's worth stuffed onto the end of side one and the rest shoveled onto the beginning of side two.

Past that, the cultural exchange hardly goes beyond the acquisition of a few additional drummers and Copeland's translation of the term "bozalimalamu" as "what's a-happenin', y'all?" "It's the same thing, same thing, same thing," he sings, "It's the same music, same old beat," and it is, as long as he and his band and his record company are running the show.

—Bart Bull



Tony Williams
Foreign Intrigue
Blue Note

James Newton
The African Flower: The Music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn
Blue Note

Ah, the variety of options available to a consumer in the waning years of the 20th Century. Here sit two records that swing, remember the word "art," comment on the world around us, and are about as alike as Madonna and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. It's all in the attitude: James Newton's all-Ellington/Strayhorn project snags the composers' emotional essence so perfectly—with radically different instrumentation and arrangements from the originals—it's as though he's put on a mask and invited the audience to suspend disbelief and take a walk with him into an older world that still has emotional and aesthetic gas to burn. Then

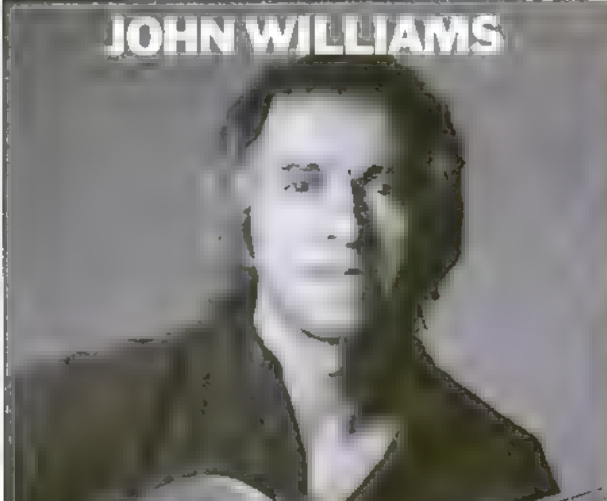
there's drummer Tony Williams, who in the '60s helped found the worthless fusion genre. Here he's done a prodigious routine and returned to acoustic music, producing a well-fed, consistently athletic, and intelligent disc that just about cries out the virtues of honesty, maturity, living with a nice car and family, jogging, reading books, and in general having a nice time.

Williams, as a member of Miles Davis's classic 1963-68 rhythm section, was terrifying, a drummer obsessed. With Ron Carter (who guests on *Foreign Intrigue*), he displayed his fascination with the intoxications of swinging, on one level, the point of such records as *E.S.P.* and *Miles Smiles* is simply the sound of a deadly rhythm section—clear, uncluttered, and reckless. It sounds like a fast car driven on a dark night by someone who knows there's a cliff somewhere in the neighborhood and just doesn't care. *Foreign Intrigue* is a record made by someone who stopped just in time, looked over the edge, took in the nasty business down there, and walked away. The record sounds conventional—nice tunes, some Latinish numbers, standard solo routines—but Williams thunders. He's stepped back from thrill-seeking intensity into a type of energy that advertises the simpler joys of physicality, of making music that willingly takes pleasantries at face value. Which isn't to say that the record monochromatically represents an idealized, sunny world; it doesn't. The dissenting, uneasy voices of newcomers Wallace Roney, whose controlled trumpet lines scan scared, as if a botched phrase would release some big, smelly evil thing lurking on the other side of the room, and Donald Harrison, whose ripping, shrill alto playing stomps bland optimism, add just enough acid to turn Williams's charming tunes and muscular thrashings into charismatic, rich music.

Newton emerged from the '70s southern California scene that produced historicists Arthur Blythe, David Murray, and Butch Morris; given his background and obvious affinity for Billy Strayhorn's chromatic lushness, it's not surprising that he's made a record of Ellington/Strayhorn tunes—and it's a sharp commercial hook, too. Newton's sentimentality evolved into romanticism a long time ago, so the shock isn't how well he fits within the Ellington framework, but that his own catalog of moods doesn't butt in more often. The mostly unusual works—"Black and Tan Fantasy," "Virgin Jungle," and "Fleurette Africaine," among others—are played by a group that at times boasts a front line of John Blake, Arthur Blythe, and Olu Dara, the musicians work the emotional terrain that Ellington excavated with the originals. Not that there's parroting here, it's just that, for instance, Newton's catalog of "modern" techniques—split tones, singing, and playing simultaneously—are nicely integrated into Ellington's expansiveness. Unlike Williams, whose record sounds like an honest self-portrait, Newton has constructed a world of sounds and emotions he may not have come by naturally. But I believe him, and that's what counts.

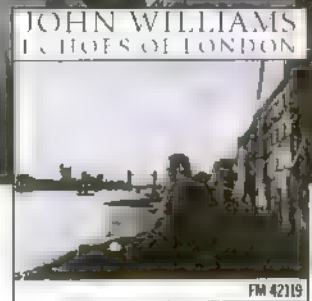
—Peter Watrous

JOHN WILLIAMS




The Master of Guitar brings Echoes Of London to America!

JOHN WILLIAMS
ECHOES OF LONDON



FM 42119

MASTERWORKS



John Williams has set the stage for two very special events this spring! First, the release of his brilliant new album, "Echoes Of London," a spirited collection of classical and popular music celebrating the city of London. Second, the announcement of John Williams' first U.S. tour in more than a decade!

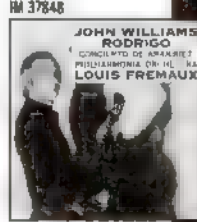
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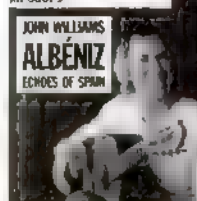
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HM 37848



HM 36679



UNDERGROUND

Column by Andrea 'Enthal

Boon is dead. The big, bounding Minutemen guitarist won't come bouncing on stage anymore looking like a fresh-scrubbed rhinoceros with a brand new pogo stick. Boon is really dead. He died while this column was being written, December 23, 1985. Damn.

It's too late to tell Boon anything. To Mike Watt and George Hurley I just want to say how much their music and presence meant to the underground in the first half of the 1980s. The Minutemen weren't one band. They evolved, churning out songs like some people take out trash.

The Minutemen were everything in practice this column is about in theory. So this month's Underground is dedicated to Mike and George in memory of Dennes Boon.

Deep in the Mind of the Purple Things lies a stack of oldies drenched in musical molasses. It's the kind of sticky, heavy sound that spawned the Cramps. With half their brains deep-fried in the remnants of psychedelia and the other half raised on a steady diet of old American TV, the Purple Things have nothing but late-night movie camp and regurgitated '50s tunes inside their heads. So what comes out is swamp surf with "Wipe Out" drumming and echoed voices that put the Grand Canyon to shame. "Beautiful Red Sky" steals its line from the oldie "Fortune Teller" while "Wild Man"'s guitar beat is a hundred percent *Twilight Zone*. What makes their total thievery forgivable is one scorching psychotic version of Red Crayola's "Hurricane Fighter Plane." It dices. It slices. It would probably come in one of those order-now-and-get-every-record-ever-recorded-in-the-last-seven-centuries-on-your-doorstep sets if they ever did one of 1986 underground swampabilly bands. Screeching and screaming in great incoherent swaths and mumbling like a long-lost flashback in search of a mind, "Plane" is a rolling slab of slithering guitar with a beat poking out of it. You can get hold of it through their label, Media Burn, by writing Purple Things, 48 Charles Rowan House, Magery St., Kings Cross, London WC1 England

There's something strange about the sterile tract house and happy threesome on the cover of the "Lorne Greene Shares His Precious Fluids" EP by **Salamander Jim**. It's not just that the grass is orange and the sky is periwinkle, though that might cause some suspicion. It isn't even that the toothy suburban threesome think nothing of romping around nude. What's funny is the old geezer's belly. He's pregnant—with the post-psychedelic seeds of the deepest, darkest American grunge rock, some might say. Salamander Jim has hard electric chords and a whooped-out growl that owes half its soul to Captain Beefheart and the other half to demons on a three-day pass from hell. They've got a plodding sense of repetition and an irreverent streak aimed at perverting any eager-beaver Cub Scout or blue-eyed sugarplum. They've also got bits of delicately dark piano plinking and a horn-happy, if somewhat disjointed, version of James Brown's "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag." Stopping and starting, chanting in saxophone-drenched screams, and whispering a wiped-out "c'mon, fellas" to introduce the dirgy "Ugly Breakfast," this record is one deliciously fried slice of Amer-Aussie



roots from Red Eye Records, GPO Box 211, Sydney 2001 Australia.

Minuteman offers another slice of Sydney psychedelia, peppering a rattlesnake-shake tambourine with monkey and parrot calls to create the swampy jungle jangle "Voodoo Slaves." More Cramps/crypt music, this time mixed with spaghetti western plod, "Voodoo" awks and squawks as echo-laden drums pulse under Dug Lonsdale's vocal drones. A finely crafted meld of roots revivalism and modern guitar pop, the 7-inch "Slaves" comes from Sonics Records, 49 Rue J-Morlent-76, 600 Le Havre, France

As for the **Minutemen**, they're not dead. They're frozen. You can find them in *Paranoid Time* now.

"I try to work," their voice chants out from this black vinyl time capsule of 1980, "and I keep thinking of World War III / I try to talk to girls and I keep thinking of World War III / The goddamn 6 o'clock news makes sure I keep thinking of World War III."

Fast like punk but loose as a beatnik jam, *Paranoid Time* is a puree of pop concentrate. No extra ingredients. One bar of introduction is all each fiery song snippet gets. No more. No time. Gotta fit the verse in. When the tune's done, they end it. Right then and there. No bullshit. Next song coming up fast. They called themselves the Minutemen

because these first tunes run 56 seconds, 59 seconds, and 73 seconds flat. Shockingly minimal, their songs were stabs into an improvisational territory where pop was pared down to one man chanting and the other slamming chunks out of guitar.

The 'Men's chunks go funk for the *Punch Line*, a tough, terse haiku of an album where taut guitar bumbles tumble over an off-kilter beat. Snips replace snippets as minimal is diced down to half a min. From the mutant antiwar square dance of "History Lesson" through the hard, rusty-sounding "Static" chords, *Punch* is a collection of pulsing, churning song capsules, each containing an abstract message about society in general and the state of mankind within.

"His face is young, his hands are old / The past is empty, blind, and cold" recite the Minutemen in "Plight," one of 18 songs on their 1982 offering, *What Makes a Man Start Fires?* An aptly named sucker full of furiously swirling guitar and George's pristinely tense drums crunching and galloping in syncopated patterns, delicate yet desperate as they crash past hoedown chords and drips of guitar chime. The

Below: The late D. Boon, regretfully a new addition to rock 'n' roll heaven's hell of a band; opposite page, top: Boon with fellow Minutemen George Hurley (left) and Mike Watt





name of the album comes from the surreal caption in Raymond Pettibon's cover illustration, featuring an angry young boy racing out the door of a bedroom he has just set ablaze.

That the Minutemen are frozen forever now is a crime. What made them important was their refusal to freeze. Grumbling and growling about Russia over flutelike slithers of feedback guitar on one track of *Buzz or Howl Under the Influence of Heat*, then pulsing with an intensity that not even the hardest 'coremen can usually match, the Minutemen bounce through gentle jangles and sanded bass shards in "Little Man With a Gun in His Hand." They never could sing, at least not in a schooled sense, and when they jam it's a weed-wild scatter through a free form no punist would ever accept. But they packed more guts per vocal chord into those flat, raspy bellows than any commercial warblers with voice coaches and overdub tracks, and you can hear more spirit in their flailing and chaotic jams than a dozen technically correct musicians could do with all their charts "Was that good enough?" Mike asks full of tough sarcasm at the record's end.

Double Nickels on the Dime, a four-sided 45-track summary of every style the Minutemen ever touched, came out the next year like a gorilla on fire. Taking the band in more directions than the plot takes *Hill Street Blues*, *Nickels* builds on their crunched, condensed funk, dips into jazzcore, and meanders off into beatnik improvisations. "Corona" country-pokes while "Cohes on," the album's shocker, is delicate, melodic acoustic guitar. The Minutemen are a pretty-music band? Just when you think you have 'em all figured out, they slash their past and leave it behind.

The Minutemen left me behind for *Project: Mersh*, a foray into woven mantrasque guitar nyarls in homage to the era of Steppenwolf and Blue Oyster Cult. Now they're locked in a 3 Way Tie (for Last). A three-bean salad of an album, *Tie* continues their early '70s explorations with a breathlessly taut hoofbeat-paced Blue Oyster Cult cover, "The Red and the Black." "No One"



Monica Dea

is an exercise in Hendrix-style guitar worship, while their version of Roky Erickson's "Bermuda" thunks and rumbles like a bad single on an even worse portable phonograph. Recorded over a home telephone line, it sounds like they used two paper cups and a string.

Tie has an overtly political message behind its lyrics, something previous albums stayed one humanized abstraction above. But when the Minutemen are hot, they're killers, "peace" lyrics or not. With cold, rhythm box-inspired percussion and hard-streaked bass scratches, "Political Nightmare" starts and stops and leeches terror out of its own dark atmosphere as an echo-buried voice asks questions like a throbbing conscience and guitars nyarl to a swirled, frenzied hell. Blasts of field radio rage with war talk as Mike Watt evokes the tone of a Feiffer cartoon in "Spoken Word Piece," and "Ack Ack Ack," a 26-second blast of its own, delivers a straight pulse of heavy duck talk couched in powersound. There are also some real clunkers on *Tie*. But that's what made the Minutemen great. Whatever you expected, they did something else. If you didn't like them one minute, they were always changing. Now they're frozen in black vinyl. We'll never know where *Tie* would have led. All the Minutemen's major works are available from two related sources: SST, P.O. Box 1, Lawndale, CA 90260 and New Alliance, P.O. Box 21, San Pedro, CA 90733. New Alliance is manufactured and distributed by SST.

Before Boon's death, Watt ventured into projects outside the Minutemen. One

was a live album with **Saccharine Trust**. On *Worldbroken*, guitars screech in sinewy saws like an '80s answer to the saxophone while Jack Brewer recites latter-day beatnikisms in a voice that sounds, at times, like the cartoon character Top Cat's sidekick, Choo Choo. "Mike came to play bass on the album *Worldbroken*," Brewer explained, "because he's the fire hose at SST."

"The what?" I asked. "He's always running into and solving problems," Brewer explained. There were so many problems the album almost didn't happen. It was a live recording, and at the last minute Saccharine Trust's bassist declined the gig.

Saccharine Trust is not easy listening with or without Mike Watt. It's poetry, whispered, ranted, and raved over not-quite-jazz improvisations with lots of delicate cymbal crashes and halt-

and-patter drums. Guitars sheer off into waves of music. *Worldbroken* is one long jam from SST, P.O. Box 1, Lawndale, CA 90260

As for the second half of the 1980s, don't be surprised if the Minutemen still manage to figure prominently in its sound. There won't be another band named the Minutemen, but neither Mike Watt nor George Hurley have any intention of slinking off and hiding. Watt has been seen experimenting in a two-bass duo appropriately titled Dos Bases and with Hurley he's been rehearsing a new trio under the working name The Fire Hose.

Boon is dead, but that isn't the end of the story.

For a more complete Minutemen discography, send a stamped and self-addressed envelope to me c/o SPIN, 1965 Broadway, New York, NY 10023





Sin

Column by John Leland

Fringe music for now people: imports, indies, and the collapse of the center.

Sure, I got some mainstream singles from major labels this month. I got an ABC single, something by Talk Talk. They were alright. But the great corporate patriarch commonly mistaken for the music industry missed out on all the great fluke records that make up this month's column. The center has collapsed, and apparently anyone who can construct four minutes of respectable and competent dance or pop music has gone into hiding. Which leaves the field wide open for an inspired Butthole pilgrimage, a Big Stick that looks like Tina Turner and shit at the same time, some b-boys who talk about the b-girls, and a tribute to Edie Sedgwick from an aspiring spiritual heirress. And other stuff, too.

Spoonie Gee: "Get Off My Tip" b/w "Spoon-Spoon-Spoonie Gee" (Tuff City)

With all the sexism running rampant through the current crop of rap records (Doug E. Fresh's "Treat Her Like a Prostitute," Dana Dane's "Nightmares," B-Boys' "Girls," LL Cool J's "Dear Yvette"), it's good to hear the genre's slickest bullshitter warn the guys that they'll get theirs if they keep telling the females to get off their tips. Even better, though, is hearing him shovel the sex rap on the B-side. He's the ever-lovin' poet and people all know it, but since the silken come on of 1980's "Love Rap"—still a hot catalogue record—he's let the new cats pass him by. "Spoon-Spoon-Spoonie Gee" is his way of telling the b-boys who he is and what he's done. Not to mention tell

ing the b-girls what's still to come: "I'll hump and hump and grab your rump / And I'll make your heart go thump thump thump." Ah, romance

The Adult Net: "Edie" b/w "Get Around" & "Atom Power" (Beggars Banquet import)

Brix Smith is the Fall's answer to Billy Zoom. Blond, beautiful, and unmistakably Californian, she's a flash of brassy and bratty rock 'n' roll style amid a bunch of boring, downtrodden arty types who fight against the existence of same. Be glad that not everyone thinks that nirvana is a Porsche, but if you're in a pretentious band, find someone who does to play guitar. When Brix steps out as the guiding . . . er, intelligence of the Adult Net, she rocks right out, restoring to the electric guitar its iconic integrity. On the hopelessly misguided "Edie," she sings, "In the death seat of Warhol's car / It's a shame your life didn't go far / He's still here but where are you / I wish I had the time to know you." Yeah. But you'll love it anyway; like the book of the same title, it's trash at its finest. I wonder if she dots her i's with hearts.

Butthole Surfers: "Cream Corn From the Socket of Davis" (Touch & Go EP)

Call this Filth on 45. On the centerpiece to this depraved EP, "Moving to Florida," the always existential Buttholes take one of the ugliest pilgrimages ever as they go "down to Florida to bowl a perfect game."

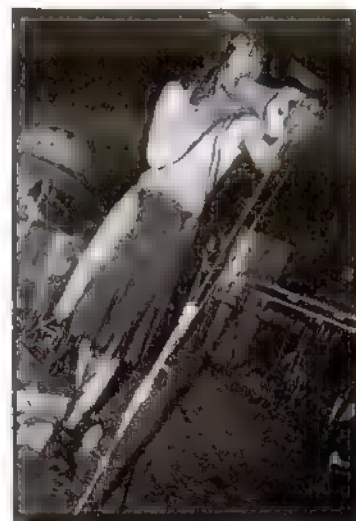
Heirs to the Flipper throne, they challenge your ability to withstand the intensely moronic tedium of their song structures—in this case a directionless call and response with a clipped Beefheart riff. Men have been driven insane by less. Maybe that explains why the band believes that "they be making tadpoles the size of Mercuries in Florida." The rest of this record, while not as overtly commercial, is equally squalid, and the Buttholes even throw in some odd time signatures, just to show that the joke is not entirely on you. As if you cared.

Big Stick: "Hell on Earth" (Recess EP)

Big Stick is a man and a woman from Astoria, Queens who wear matching Tina Turner hairdos and make dense, abrasive noise that the Jesus and Mary Chain might consider overkill. They sing about true stuff like drag racing and looking like shit, and their record sounds like it just woke up and isn't thinking straight yet. It sounds like they spent about \$10 on it. And it sounds like these guys are way into drugs—they went wild with trashadelic overdubs and edits. That's about all you need to know, except that if your local K-Mart doesn't stock it, score directly from Recess at 26-10 18th Street, Astoria, NY 11102

The BBoys: "Girls—Part 2" (Vintertainment)

"I had this girl named Abie / Guess what she gave me / It burned so bad / The doctors couldn't save me / I was chillin' till I got the penicillin / When I saw Abie I started illin'." And on and on, all the way to the paper in the middle of the record, the BBoys score with the funniest rap since "The Show." Nothing fancy here—just a rote electronic beat, as Donald D and Brother B spill the word about the freaks of their desires. There's Anna from Louisiana (rhymes with banana), Bess with the big breasts, fat Pat who was wack till she smoked some crack, Kim who's down with S & M, and other fantasy women. Not the most enlightened record in the world, but sly enough to need no apologies. Love it.



Stanton-Miranda: "Wheels Over Indian Trails" (Factory Benelux import)

"I prefer the vulgar to the obvious," sings the childlike Stanton-Miranda in what may be as clear a declaration of dilettantism as you're likely to find. As a Factory record, this is almost obligated to wallow in at least a couple of inches of gloom and despair, but the lyrics—clipped images dancing tenuously on her dry voice—pull back at the repeated phrase "roadside crash." Like recent New Order material, this is more serious dance music than serious whining. And the comparison is only logical: Miranda (from Thick Pigeon) gets help from New Orderly Gillian Gilbert and her sister Kim, and the single is remixed by John Robie, who souped up New Order's "Sub-Culture." The playing is spare and geared to sequencers; Robie's unpredictable, dark, explosive mix emerges as the record's most potent force. But his vocoder clichés emerge as the villain. I'd prefer a little vulgarity here myself.

Marc Almond: "The House Is Haunted by the Echo of Your Last Goodbye" (Some Bizarre import)

Sound overblown? That's just the starting point. Marc Almond's gothic cabaret act is as obsessive and monomaniacal as Foetus's sonic torment and every bit as theatrically projected. On the Judgment Day, Almond wants to be the last Edith Piaf impersonator in hell. This can easily amount to a one-way ticket to boredom, and too much of his post-Soft Cell material dwells dully on its own not particularly shocking postures. This single, however, is an exception. Almond lays on the mascara with a putty knife, but the ghoulishness is all metaphorical. He just pushes the metaphor a little harder than most people would. Horn sections seem to come out of the woodwork, and the melody for once flows naturally. Like Lydia Lunch's *Queen of Siam* album, it's coolest for the way it insouciantly mocks the very sincerity it claims to project.

Chip E. Inc. featuring K. Joy: "Like This" (D.J. International)

Hated this thing at first because it was such a blatant rip-off of "Moody" by terminally wonderful E.S.G., Bronx girlhood's answer to Public Image Ltd. Now I'm just pissed that I didn't think of it first. "Like This" is an exquisite post-disco dance record. Like E.S.G., this group trims its pop funk down to the basics: simple, repetitive bass and drums and lyrics that reduce themselves to mantras. "Like This" adds some garden-variety sound effects, but both songs bounce on that same economical bass line. In fact, K. Joy's vocals are so anonymous that after a few listenings, you don't even notice them; they fade into the background with the stuttering tape clichés. Which is a good thing. "Moody" is a much better song, but hell, that's like slagging Hüsker Dü 'cause they're not the Sex Pistols.



Whistle: "(Nothing Serious) Just Bug-gin'" (Select)

When UTFO hit with "Roxanne, Roxanne," they started more than just a name game, they opened the door for pure pop rap records. This Whistle single, co-produced by UTFO's Kangol Kid, is just such a beast. This is to Run D.M.C. what Katrina and the Waves are to Motorhead: fluffy, catchy, lightweight, and—under the right circumstances—a lot of fun. Whistle is about hooks and silliness. The only lengthy rap on the record is presented as a tongue-twister, and the mix is a collection of sonic gags. Punch lines show up late and ridiculously processed, and the most infectious tag on the record isn't the rap chorus—it's a vocoderized effect laid on as the crew repeats the word "bug" to sing the theme to *Green Acres*. And it's all as slickly put together as your favorite Mr. Mister song.

SIDESWIPEs

After the Adult Net, my favorite slice of unmitigated trash this month is the 7 inch "Be a Zero" (Mountain) EP by the **Double "O" Zeros**, a horrendous send-up of glam pomp by four guys in silly blond wigs who got their start recording the jingle for the equally tacky Howard Stern's afternoon radio show. These guys make Redd Kross sound serious. And witty... On the more serious side, those elfin identical twins from *Gene Loves Jezebel* dabble in transcendent mysticism on their four-song (actually, five-song, but two are the same) "Desire" EP (Relativity). They have the sound down, with blocks of

(Opposite top) *The Adult Net's* Brix Smith; (bottom) *Butthole Surfer* Gibby Haynes; (left) *Marc Almond*; (below) *BBoys Brother B* (left) and *Donald D.*

(Homestead), a feminist anthem about a subject close to the band's heart: power. Kim Gordon screams a message of tranquility as Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo turn their guitars into outboard motors... **Roxanne Shante** freestyles bravely on the horrors of crack on the inexplicably titled "Def Fresh" (Pop Art). But as clearly as the rap underlines her social consciousness, it still sounds more like a rude put-down than a piece of well-meaning advice. Which is why it's so good... **Steady B** tries to give LL Cool J what for on his "Take Your Radio" (Pop Art), a sequel to LL's "Radio." He's combative enough to give the record attitude, and LL's beat gives it some whomp. But if he ever really had to match wits with LL, he'd probably go into early retirement... Still, he does a better job than **Pretty Ricky and Boo-Ski**, who show up a year late with "It's Mine" (Select), their sequel to T La Rock and Jazzy Jay's epochally spartan "It's Yours." An unthinking follow-up to an inelegant record and a good argument against sequels... Peter Buck of R.E.M. and Keith Streng from the Fleshtones team up as the **Full Time Men** on an EP of the same name (Coyote), apparently for the purpose of delineating exactly what makes their respective bands so unsatisfying. If these two bands are enough to make you believe in rock stars, this EP is enough to make you hate rock. Nice guys, dreadful record... At this point, I welcome TV theme music as enthusiastically as I do Roxanne sequels, but two rap singles this month put the stuff to good use. **MC Chill's** "Bust This Rhyme" (Fever) abandons the *Gilligan's Island* theme early and gets into lewd variations on the theme of wellness



MESSIN'

WITH THE HOOK



Jim Marshall

John Lee Hooker, the living link between country blues and uptown R&B, answers the question that has baffled mankind throughout the ages: How Can I Impress the Ladies? Article by Bart Bull

A battered motel room in Watts, the Glen-Dora Motor Lodge. When you come in, John Lee Hooker is standing at the stove in the cramped kitchenette. He's cooking him up some red beans and rice, some biscuits and gravy, some neckbones. *Battered neckbones*

Or no, better—it's a woman at the stove. A middle-aged black woman, thick at the hips, wearing puffy bedroom slippers. And John Lee Hooker's settled in at the yellow linoleum dinette table with the rusty chrome legs. He has an old undershirt on, and as you come in, he looks up and says (nigh-perfect ZZ Top-imitation growl), "How how how how . . ."

No. John Lee Hooker is in bed. On the eighth floor of Santa Monica's Bay View Plaza Holiday Inn. Half under the covers and half out, half dressed and half not, he's watching the Dodgers and the Mets duke it out on the Game of the Week, his Robitussin cough syrup and his Tylenols and his prescription bottles all gathered right close at hand there on the bedstand.

"Son," he says kindly, warmly, mournfully, with a pitiful but resonant sob in his throat, "The blues ain't nothin' but a good man feelin' bad."

No. He says "Er-um . . . OK if I leave the game on?"

Now not only is this no Glen-Dora Motor Lodge, it's also about the sharpest, slickest, *sleekest* Holiday Inn you've ever seen. It's a scaled-up upscale post-modernish protomodel Holiday Inn, pink, with beachgazing balconies enameled Kicky Green. This is a Holiday Inn with Ritz-Carlton envy, with leanings toward twice-a-day linen turn-down service, with hand-milled soap and high amenities, and maybe even the mystery chocolates—those bittersweet little bars of high-gloss chocolate that make their miraculous nightly appearance atop the fresh-plumped pillows. And John Lee Hooker's holed up here at the Bay View Plaza—the Glen-Dora Motor Court can go straight to hell. Serves somebody *else* right to suffer.

In the interest of keeping this afternoon's interview quick and concise and brief and businesslike, and in



hopes of keeping an eye on the Dodgers—"I was a Dodgers fan ever since I was a kid" —Hooker goes right directly into the Standard All-Purpose Rap. Er-um . . . because by the time a guy gets around to becoming a sho-nuff Elderly Black Bluesman, he's most likely been interviewed umpteen million times by urgent reverent blues scholars and indulgent reverent radio hosts and indigent reverent music journalists and tolerant reverent newspaper reporters, and by reverent reverent record-collecting nitwits too. And by the time a guy gets to be John Lee Hooker, Last of the Delta Blues Greats (the subhead over the newspaper story reads either "Mourns Death of the Blues" or "Says Blues Will Never Die"), the living link between country blues and uptown R&B, between the juke joint and the jukebox . . . well, long before John Lee Hooker got to be 68 years old, he polished him up a nice seamless Standard Rap, an all-purpose, all-comers set of stock answers to the Ten Most Deadly Obvious Questions: "Son, the blues ain't nothin' but a good man interviewed bad."

The Standard Rap is nearly as pure an artistic form as, say, the twelve-bar blues (although, as it happens, twelve-bar blues is a pattern that Hooker never much follows), a somewhat newer form but steeped in deep traditions of its own. All the elder blues statesmen use it, and like the venerable blues itself, it was born of oppressive circumstance. Namely, the unending stream of white blues aficionados with interviews in mind, each one wearing all the predictable requisite beliefs strung together like rosary beads, each one thrilled to death to be hearing the straight skinny from the soulful source, each one dead set and determined to get the true scoop on How Did You First Get Started? and Who Were Your Major Influences? and What Do You Think of the Rock Bands of Today? and especially, *most especially*, the one they always ask, all of 'em, the archivists and the reporters and the radio hosts and the liner-note writers and the record-collecting numbskulls, the one they *all* want to know: What *IS* the Blues?

Elderly Bluesman interviewing Little Stevie Spielberg: "So tell me, man—What *IS* the Movies?"

John Lee Hooker's own rote version of the standard recitation begins in the farmlands near Clarksdale, Mississippi, where Highway 49 and Highway 61 meet, the very heart of the upper Delta region, sometime around 1929. "Well, er-um, really I got started er-um, my stepfather, Will Moore, taught me when I was about 12 years old." He starts slowly, but warms up and gets rolling good as soon as he hits a key word—*drifting*. "Er-um, I drifted up, get me a old guitar, I left there when I was fo-teen, and I come into Memphis first, stayed there a coupla months, went on to Cincinnati, stayed there about three years—I wa'n't lookin' to get involved, you know. Driftin', I played around streets, house parties, bars, gettin' better and better at a young age. Then finally I drifts into Detroit when I was about close to 20. I played around there a long time, and when I got to be 21 I could play in the bars. And I got to be the talk of the town."

And that comprises the first very concentric chorus of Hooker's version of the very very Standard Rap How I Got Started, How I Struggled, and How I Got Over, four bars of each. It's a neat package, reinforced at the corners, suitable for framing, ready for more detailed embellishment should an especially diligent blueshound be on the case. And the details are worth knowing, too—Hooker's life has been full. That step-father of his, Will Moore, played with Blind Lemon Jefferson and Charley Patton both, two of the truly primary patriarchs of the blues, two of those shadowy blue legends who make blues research such a tantalizing, prickly quest. And by digging a little deeper, by pushing Hooker toward even earlier choruses, the researcher discovers that little John Lee's first singing took place in the local church choir—consider the choir that could incorporate John Lee Hooker's prepubescent rumble-grumble!—and that his first electric guitar was given to him by yet another Legend of



Mark Sorfian

How come the young guys in white blues bands never wear nylon sox?

the Blues, the founding father of electric blues guitar, T-Bone Walker. The urbane T-Bone, a big-band man from Texas, a real showman with a soupçon of Kansas City swing salting his blues, dug John Lee Hooker, the roughest, rawest, rudest of guitar players, dug him enough to present him with a pawnshop prize—and this at a time when electric guitars were a good deal scarcer than '48 Studebakers are today.

Ah, but the problem with the Standard Rap, advance-chewed and predigested and yet interesting all the same, is that it interferes with the possibility of getting on down to the real questions, the revealing questions, the ones (What *IS* the Blues?) that ache to be asked. Like, for instance: How come the young guys in white blues bands never wear nylon pimp sox?

And they don't either. It's weird. And totally undocumented in the scholarly journals. Because white guys in blues bands will do anything—*anything*—to be just like their blues hootin', blues hollerin' blues heroes. They'll quit school and get regular jobs and even quit callin' their parents long-distance for money just so's they'll have *really* paid some dues. They'll scrimp and scrape and suffer, they'll smoke way too many Lucky Strikes—filterless ones, even!—and they'll swig out of passed-around half-pint bottles without wiping off the top. They'll commence to chewing on matchsticks. They'll take to beating their wives and kicking their dogs and borrowing money from all their old friends and then ditching them—*anything* to achieve that elusive urban blues authenticity . . . but they just won't—just can't—put on the pimp sox, the nylon/polyblend socks with 3 percent genuine Ban-Lon and the hi-contrast textured ribs stretching over the ankle knobs like a Bareback Pleasure Stretch condom in Soul Fiesta colors of maroon or lemon or midnite blue, the stylin' and smilin' sox that three generations of pimps and players and pushers and preachers aike have sworn by, one and all.

You'll see them sometimes, the young white blues guys, up on the stage backing some touring semi-legendary blues notable or seminotable touring blues



Jim Marshall

nopeful. (In Phoenix, Arizona, for example, some of the local indefatigable enthusiasts, lacking a whole lot in the way of an authentic regional bluesman suitable for installation as their band's hood ornament, went out and rounded them up an African fellow who was working at Motorola or someplace; big and black and middle-aged, he fit the specs almost perfectly, hollering out the appropriate Delta-thickened syllables, *Drahp dah hown mawmahw, toin yo' lamp dahown luh ow* . . . until he came offstage, where he carried on his conversations in one of those charming African colonial accents. He came up to me once at an Otis Rush show and said, "Sounds a good deal like Albert King, wouldn't you say?") You can see 'em, the young white blues guys, up onstage backing some middle-aged blues notable, and he'll be dressed pretty much the way John Lee Hooker is here at the Holiday Inn, if not quite so expensively. Because Hooker is sharp. The bedcovers are pushed back so you can see he's wearing a pair of pimp sox, red ones that go nicely with his red polyester slacks and the red suspenders that set off the fine silky black undershirt be-



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neath his half buttoned red dress shirt with the wide, wide wingspan collar scheduled for takeoff across the lapels of the red jacket he's draped over the chair by the dresser

A pretty slick ensemble onstage, topped off with a white felt fedora—the prosperous look the older black bluesmen unanimously prefer. And back behind the older gentleman in the polyester-bend suit will be three or four or five white boys in their 20s and 30s, and as far as technique goes, they can probably play flashy 12-bar rings around the old black guy . . . but they just can't do it—they can't slip on a stretchy pair of those pimp socks or wear one of those polyester suits. The older of the white boys will wear vintage thrift-shop zoot suits, adding a hand-painted palm-tree tie to demonstrate what blues-boppin' sports they really are, and the younger ones all go for slick, shiny shark-skin suits with the continental cut, the kind Elvis Costello and Huey Lewis wear, and maybe a pair of Blues Brothers shades, Ray-Bans or something, to pay tribute to their roots . . . but as far as the long, broad, wide, wide polyester collar with the points spread eagled outward for maximum aerodynamic lift—or the pimp socks either—they just can't bring themselves to do it. There are sacrifices, and then there's suffering—real suffering. Serves somebody else right to suffer

Hooker may have been the toast of Detroit when he drifted in during the mid-'40s, but he supported his celebrity by sweeping factory floors and swabbing urinals. A fellow named Elmer Barbara caught his act in one of Hastings Street's jumping little clubs and set about managing him, taking him into a little half-ass studio in back of the record store Barbara and his partner, Joe Van Battle, owned. Over the next few years—three years at least, and maybe as many as five—they had Hooker cut everything he knew and anything else he could fake. They knew they had something, but what they didn't have was the ways and means to put any of it out

"And one day," Hooker says, and then says it again with all the emphasis a significant moment deserves. "Then . . . one . . . day . . . he took me over to meet Bernie Besman." Besman was another local operator, with a small-time record distribution business and an even smaller time label of his own. "When he heard me, he said 'I never heard anything like it before.' He said 'You got a ahnusual style, nobody got a style like you.' " And nearly 40 years later, Hooker can't help but agree: "Well, it ain't nobody got a style like John Lee Hooker. I got my style all to myself." No brag, just fact—Hooker's style is style, the blood essence of style, a style so strong and so fiercely established in the self that there's no more chance of another man copying his sound than there is of trying to steal his heartbeat. And nobody knows that better than John Lee Hooker himself

Besman knew it too, and he took Hooker into his studio. "My first record, which Elmer Barbara already had down, was a big, big hit." "Boogie Chillen" was an earth-moving stomp, raw and reckless, recalling the unleashed exultation of the night Johnny Lee was in bed and heard Papa tell Mama

Let that boy boogie-woogie

It's in him and it got to come out!

"Which Bernie Besman tried to claim, you know, he helped me do that. He didn't. He got his name on all my stuff, everything that he did, he had his name on my stuff, said that he helped write it. Which was untrue. He couldn't write the first line of blues—not a few can't! He's a Jew—a Jew can't write no blues!"

Turned loose at last, "Boogie Chillen" marked the beginning of Hooker's recording career. It carved John Lee Hooker's first notch on the history of the blues, provided a place for him at the table in the Valhalla of blues immortals. More important, it made him a living. It was a solid sender, a jukebox essential in every black bar—down-home and antiquated and uptown, electrified modern in the same moment. It made him a living by making his name. He set his broom



Mick Gutzman

aside. "And the next one that came out was 'In the Mood,' and it was a big, big hit. 'Hobo Blues'—it was a big, big hit. 'Crawling King Snake'—it hit off for me. You might remember some of those numbers," he says with something like modesty. "You wa n't around then, but you know."

A young man in his early 30s, he'd made his name and he was hot. So hot, in fact, that just one John Lee Hooker wasn't enough to go around. And since his sound was so dead simple and close to the bone that nobody could seem to steal it, his own voice became his only competitor. Barbara and Van Battle had their stockpile of unreleased tunes, and Besman had connections to a lot of little labels that were paying cash money for a steady jukebox hit. Under contract already to Besman's Sensation label and licensed to L.A.'s Modern, Hooker's material began showing up on other companies' records, featuring rough approximations of his name: John Lee Booker, John Lee Cooker, John Lee, Johnny Lee, Sr. John Lee Hooker, Delta John, Texas Slim, The Boogie Man, even Birmingham Sam & His Magic Guitar. The authors of scholarly liner notes used to scold him for the intolerable inconsistencies this created in their alphabetized record collections, but he was short sightedly intent on eating, and failed to consider the longer historical view.

By the late '50s, the blues business shriveled as record labels and club owners reaped the more munificent rewards of rock 'n' roll and R&B. Times toughened for bluesmen everywhere, and even from the top of the blues heap it looked like a short step back to pushing the broom. Then, first in England and Europe and finally in the United States, the "folk music" boom occurred

Gathered together near college campuses, with their

tastes formed around a prim, puritan disdain for pop, folk music aficionados were desperate for authenticity, a commodity found in its purest form in the country blues on records made 30 years before. Authenticity could also be squeezed from recently rediscovered antique rural bluesmen who were found not in dusty thrift shops like the treasured records but on daring scholarly search-and-employ missions to the segregated South. Blues researchers would return to Cambridge like triumphant archaeologists just back from crypt-kicking amongst the withered mummies of Egypt, bearing contracts autographed by elderly black gentlemen who might not have actually played any music, authentic or otherwise, in the last decade or two but who were only too willing to throw down the harness traces for a three-figure folk festival paycheck that was more than they'd net from a couple of successful years of sharecropping. And unlike folk music, a check's authenticity can be confirmed by a bank.

Real folk authenticity was not found, it goes without saying, coming out of an electric guitar amp. When Muddy Waters first went to England in the late '50s, blues fans were simply appalled at his amplified sound and at the lack of venerable blues standards in his repertoire as well. Hooker's label at the time, a black-owned company which had the temerity to try him with such folk-curling abominations as saxophones and the very young Vandellas, made a brief trade with an uptown jazz label, and Hooker was at last recorded as the authentic folk artist the aficionados were sure was buried inside him. "All commercial restrictions were lifted," quote one set of liner notes, and, just to make sure, his electric guitar was too. Hooker, in no economic position to quibble, dutifully took up the acoustic guitar again and combed his memory for suitable old folk-blues favorites such as



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Charlie Patton's "Pony Blues" or "Pea Vine Blues" or Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Match Box Blues" or Sonny Boy Williamson's "Good Morning, Little School Girl"—all those orderly 12-bar rarities that drove the folkies into ecstatic bursts of authentic academic footnotes. Didn't matter if Hooker hadn't actually seen one in 25 years or so—if that's what the audiences wanted to pay for, he could sing about the back half of an old gray mule too. He made sure he got one of those "arrangements of traditional material by John Lee Hooker" copyrights on any recordings he did of any tunes that weren't nailed down tight, and he managed to slip a few current songs of his own in when nobody was watching too closely. He also had, in live performances down at the old coffeehouse, an unfortunate tendency to backslide toward his electric guitar—though, as a family man with bills to pay, he usually kept the volume turned tastefully down in deference to the delicate sensibilities of his authentic overseers.

Nothing but the best and later for the garbage." It's a fairly famous little motto, the kind of uncompromising slogan guys in white blues bands like to mumble manfully into the microphone between songs, or put on the back of their debut albums. John Lee Hooker said it first, on an album he made with the white blues band Canned Heat in 1970 called *Hooker 'n Heat*. Much of Canned Heat's career had been formed around the irresistible "Boogie Chiller" riff—one of their a-bums had featured a tune called "Boogie Music" and a 40-minute-long "Refried Boogie," not to mention a 20-minute psychedelic spectacular entitled "Parthenogenesis." In the wake of their appearance at Woodstock, they decided to share their success—either that, or to gather some desperately needed credibility—by introducing John Lee Hooker to yet another generation of white kids.

There were two singers in Canned Heat, a curious set of bookends. Alan "Blind Owl" Wilson (they all gave themselves real bluesy nicknames, although, it being the hippie era, one of them chose "Sunflower") was a nearsighted young man with Coke-bottle glasses and an inclination toward scholarly pursuits in the blues field; Bob "The Bear" Hite was big and sloppy, and he had a truly heavyweight record collection. When Hite sang, he lost all control over the pronunciation of the letter R: "*Sun gonna shine, lawd, in mah back do' someday.*" Wilson, on the other hand, was so determined not to act the shoe-polish-smearing fool that he sang his blues with nearly all the usual rollin' and tumblin' Gs completely restored—he even filled in a fair share of Hite's missing Rs.

By the time *Hooker 'n Heat* was released Wilson was dead—blues-riddled victim of a scholarly inclination toward heroin. He had played remarkably acute harmonica and piano and guitar behind Hooker at the recording session—the whole band, in fact, had outdone themselves in decorous behavior, leaving Hooker almost half the album to himself, something almost unheard of on these sons-fathers occasions so beloved of the white blues boys. (A decade later, when Canned Heat had nearly been forgotten, a second volume of *Hooker 'n Heat* had trouble finding any room for Hooker at all.) In Wilson's dearly departed absence, Hite handled the liner notes. "He arrived for the session," Hite wrote of Hooker, "wearing a plaid cap, leather jacket, black satin shirt and some old dress slacks and carrying the Epiphone guitar that had been around the world more than once. Once at the studio we tried out about eight really ancient amps before finding the one that had that real 'Hooker' sound—a sound we hadn't heard on John's records for a long, long time. We built a plywood platform for John to sit on while he played. An old Silvertone amp rested a few feet away." For Hite, the key word wasn't "drifting" but "old"; amplification was authentic now, although it helped if the amp was, like the bluesman, ancient.

Hite was *Hooker 'n Heat*'s co-producer and the little scrap of studio chatter that includes Hooker's

There's another story he tells. It drifts, it rambles, it stumbles and stutters and shouts, it walks a bad, bad walk.

now-famous motto sheds something like light on the ways of white blues scholar producer-entrepreneurs and the ways John Lee Hooker had learned to deal around them. Hooker is saying

"We got about 10 [songs] there now. You know, like I told you, don't take me no three days to do no album, er um . . ."

Hite: "We'll go for a triple album!"

Hooker: "You go for a triple album, you gonna go for triple money." (Laughs.)

Hite: "We got lots of money. This is a hit album—don't worry about that money, it'll come roarin' in." It's a carefree phrase that echoes through the ages, spoken who knows how many million white times etched into how many mill on black minds: "Don't worry about that money."



Hooker (no longer laughing but serious as death "You got to worry about that now. Nothin' but the best and later for the garbage")

Hite: "What's that?"

Hooker: "Natural facts."

The song that follows is "Burning Hell," and it's attributed to the songwriting team of John Lee Hooker and Bernard Besman, although it was recorded by the wayward preacher, bluesman, and murderer Son House long before Hooker and Besman ever linked up. Little matter—it Hooker didn't write it, he's long since made its terrible defiance his own, all his own. "Ain't no heaven," he declares, "Ain't no burnin' hell / When I die / Where I go / Nobody know." He went down to the churchhouse to see the preacher, and he got down on his bendin' knees, and he prayed, he prayed, he prayed all night. He begged the preacher to pray for him but no—ain't no heaven, ain't no burnin' hell. The song has stopped being anything like a song and turned into a furious stomping rant, a screed against all chance of salvation: "Ain't no heaven," he

spits, "Ain't no burnin' hell."

"Burning Hell" is a life-or-death burst of existentialism from someone who'd most likely never heard that word, a desperate and cold-blooded denial of even the remotest possibility of comfort for any of us, in this world or the next. It came not from a wileyed French philosopher but from a black man who'd painted himself into a terrifying corner. The line between the blues and gospel may have been thin, but it was indelible. A bluesman had surely surrendered himself to the music of the devil, and there was no place for him among the saved. "Ain't no heaven," Hooker insists frantically, angrily, scornfully, tearfully, "Ain't no heaven / Ain't no burnin' hell / Hey, hey / Hey, hey / Hey, hey / Pray for me / I don't believe / I don't believe." He's smacking his guitar, his foot pounds like hollow doom. He knows his own prayers aren't worth a damn, and his soul—if he even has one—is as good as lost. And behind him on harmonica, eyes closed behind thick lenses, Alan Wilson not long for this world, is scrambling to keep up.

John Lee Hooker has two sons—two real sons of his own. Junior, John Lee Hooker, Jr., is a singer too, and sometimes opens his father's shows. "He's a good MC—he's a talker, a good singer." But it's his other son who brings the light to his eyes. "Yeah, I

got a son, he's one of the best organ players in the world—Robert, he's younger than Junior. Man, he can sound just like Jimmy Smith or anybody he want to. And just as good on piano. He never got spoiled like, er uh, Junior was. He used to go with me on tour and be my organ player. He was about seventeen or eighteen—he couldn't drink, but they would let him come in and play. He was go-o-od!" There's a pause. "But now he in the church now." Hooker goes silent, goes back to looking at the ball game on TV, buttoning another button of his red dress shirt.

In the dead silence, oddly enough, the polyester problem rises again. Because when you think about it, about the obsessive urge the white blues guys have to ape every riff and lick and gesture their black blues elders lay down, to duplicate all the degradations and to follow their soulful idols right down to the very depths of hell—just so long as it doesn't mean wearing a polyester suit with a wide collar—well, it starts

continued on p. 116



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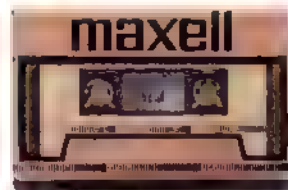
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**THE TAPE FOR
SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT.**

We interrupt our jam-packed, large format anniversary tour of today's top trendsetters and coliseum packers (at least the ones that didn't demand the cover of the magazine before deigning to speak to us) in order to draw some long-deserved attention to the biggest little cult band the city of San Francisco has to offer (not counting the Grateful Dead). Yes, nouvel e-culture aficionados, I'm referring to the one and only Residents, who for the past 13 years have slaved away in persistent noncompromise and general obscurity (or vice versa), awaiting their due, their just desserts, their... their... well, anything except the usual financial and personal rewards systematically laid out on the great coffee table of life for potentially profitable pop potentates.

Then what, then, after all these many years? In addition to the relative luxury needed to pursue their various projects in peace, perhaps they merely desire the opportunity to tear off the masks, rip off the veils, reject the anonymity with which they've encumbered themselves from their inception. And perhaps that's why, as I converse with Residents "spokespersons" Hardy Fox and Homer Flynn one winter afternoon in the group's chilly Cryptic Corporation offices, I don't feel particularly distanced from the Residents themselves. Though I wouldn't look forward to the Residents' hosting a farewell show as la Bowie did with Ziggy Stardust, or anticipate their removing their stage makeup à la Kiss (and who among us didn't want those puz heads to snap it back on again ASAP?), the Residents obviously seek a closer rapprochement with their audience on some level (and face it, the Residents have got the look you want to know better). Hence the group's 13th-anniversary world tour, in progress as I process.

Having eschewed the large-budget theatrical experience on this tour, the Residents have opted for a cozy little cabaret of an evening, presenting a smooth retrospective of 13 years of weirdo music with the assistance of frequent collaborator Snakefinger (Philip Lithman) on guitar as well as the low-budget (and slightly too boho for me) frolicking of what are obviously two supplementary Residents, who mime the group's eccentric little vignettes.

(God, I feel like I'm revealing the non-existence of Santa Claus to children here or something. Yes, there really are only two Residents and Pee Wee Herman is a Hollywood actor and Cyndi Lauper doesn't use that stupid squeaky voice in real life and Ronald Reagan didn't actually write the big article about organized crime that was in *The New York Times* and the Residents are probably these two intelligent, soft-spoken, and friendly guys talking to me in this cool little room. And that's art and commerce [and politics] in a nutshell — or not, because I could be lying.)

Received history has the Residents arriving in San Francisco in the late '60s, migrating northwestward from Louisiana. Ah, the '60s, smelling sweeter by the minute. That was a time, wasn't it? Drugs, flower power, psychedelic music — San Francisco had it all, and the Residents

Residents Only

Take a good hard look at America's preeminent underground avant-pop ensemble—you might like what you see.

Article by Richard Gehr



Mikko Anga

were not immune to its charms and false promises of a better world. Some of the most interesting music in the history of the universe was being created by drug-addled dilettantes who were not above ingesting vast quantities of mind-altering substances before mucking about in the recording studio. Heck, they even used the recording studio as an instrument unto itself. The Residents latched onto this concept like kittens to a horse-shaped cat play tunnel and ran with it.

Homer Flynn elaborates on the evolution of a pop group: "The Residents have always thought of themselves as a pop group, but as sort of a modern pop group when most of the culture seems to want to return to the past. It all seems to go back to the psychedelic era to some extent, which was very influential on the Residents. They felt things were progressing and changing, and all of a sudden it stopped. The Residents wanted to continue that feel of progress and change."

For the Residents, as for Frank Zappa, "progress and change" in the studio was inextricably linked to heavy-handed parody of prevailing pop forms. Thus the cover of the Residents' first LP, *Meet the Residents*, added insectlike features to the Beatles' faces as featured on their similarly titled record. The Residents' second album, *The Residents Present the Third Reich and Roll*, portrays Dick Clark smiling and dapper in a Nazi uniform, while the music travesties the Rolling Stones, Beatles, Box Tops, and whatever other icons intersected the crosshairs of the Residents' disdain.

Most of the Residents' early music was in fact determinedly ugly, a synthesized squall attached to an unattractive realignment of rock's martial rhythm. The Residents seemed to be clearing the air for their later work, which, though similar in texture, was more personal. Strangely enough, the Residents were the avant synthesizer precursors of a flock of electronic pulse setters, but where their descendants opted for the mellow use of said machinery, the Residents have never declined to noodle against the grain of any prevailing trend. "Just the fact that everybody says you need a disco backbeat to have a hit record seems reason enough not to do it," notes Flynn.

Fox and Flynn also quickly concur, when asked, that parody in itself was a dead end. "It got to be uninteresting and boring after a while," concludes Fox. Yet one would think that contemporary pop music, as silly and pointless as most of it obviously is, would be riper than ever for a healthy poke in the eye. "It's already parody," Fox spits out, and Flynn elaborates: "There's not enough involvement in the way of culture on the band's part anymore."

"The Residents also feel that a lot of people don't understand what they do, but they pick up the fact that there's humor in it. They feel that they're still unfairly labeled as parodists or satirists because it's an easy cubbyhole to stick something in. I certainly wouldn't deny that that's an element of the music, but there's a lot more than that going on."

Yeah, daddy-o. During the past decade our heroes have posed and solved musical quandaries in forms as limiting as an LP of 40 extremely listenable one-minute

Heineken

IMPORTS

Ears Across the Water

Don't know about you, but I've always been peeved by the fact that nowhere in the mainstream domestic rock press can an eager young culture addict read about imported records on a regular basis. Well, happy Easter, lads and lassies, because beginning this month SPIN and Heineken beer gang up to enhance your appreciation of that big, beautiful world of sound out there, with new music from England (inevitably), Belgium, Jamaica, and France. You might have to scrounge around for some of these guys, but they're worth the effort.



England's **Float Up CP** arise from the smoldering ashes of England's way fabulous avant-garde jazz-rock-funk collaboration, Rip Rig + Panic. On *Kill Me in the Morning* (Rough Trade), Float Up CP concentrates on horn-driven, eminently swing-worthy musical collusion, allowing room for the odd dub experiment here and there. Singer Nenah Cherry (trumpeter Don Cherry's daughter) possesses the most seductive of voices, while drummer Bruce Smith flails like a demon.

Acidically precise observations of the politics of fashion in Britain are **The Three Johns'** specialty. And fortunately, they've got the chops to pull it off, as evinced by their sharp new EP, *Brainbox* (He's a Brainbox) (Abstract). The title track's a commercially viable, reflexive little rouser of an anthem, and three other tracks display the Johns in a more typically abrasive.

BRIEF VACATIONS: Aux Elements Dechaînés (Rec Rec, available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012) by French trio **Etron Fou Leloublan** offers subtle and sensual mood alterers for bass/drums/organ/voice. **The Upsetter Box Set** (Trojan) contains three classic early discs—including the super-rare *Rhythm Shower* by Lee "Scratch" Perry, the kinky king of Jamaican dub. Cosmopolitan singer **Anna Domino** is American, but her new three-track single, "Take That," is available on the unusual Belgian Disques du Crepuscule label. The highlight here is "Koo Koo," which combines Domino's suave warbling with a fashionably exotic beat.

—Bob Cameron

ADVERTISEMENT



The Residents with collaborator, guitarist Snakefinger

songs (*The Residents' Commercial Album*) and an album-length threnody for wind machine and invented language (*Eskimo*). Much of their work is popular, much else is conceptual, but it's all challenging. And if any one mood could be said to hover over their output, it's one of playful, erotic melancholy.

But given that the Residents don't get around much anymore when it comes to the wonderful world of pop music, if Fox and Flynn happened to be Residents, what would they be listening to for, you know, fun?

Fox: "Nothing."

Flynn: "Virtually true. Maybe a little classical music, maybe some sound tracks. It's hard to find anybody to make a hero of. The last hero was Ennio Morricone, the Italian sound-track guy. We still dig up some of his old things, like 'When Women Wore Tails,' but his new stuff's not all that special. It's watered down because he's in Hollywood."

Downstairs from the Cryptic Corporation's offices, Ralph Records and the Residents' storage and studio space sprawls like a miniature Hollywood back lot. Old sets and costumes from the group's *Mole Show* tour mingle with various hunks of memorabilia and past video and film props. In the Residents' studio proper, one finds the expected Emulators as well as—God no, not an autographed photograph of Pee Wee Herman? Lostairs, later, the memory of this cartoon comedien brings to mind the subject of masks, artifice, image. Does anonymity simply disguise the limits? The Residents have appeared on their album covers and in person at various times dressed as mummies, in newspaper suits, in radioactivity-resistant apparel, and, most recently, in tuxedos with eyeball masks and top hats.

Fox: "Originally the Residents felt like they didn't have to look like anything, because first off they didn't really care; and they themselves didn't look very interesting. As they gradually became aware that they had to look like something, they also knew that looking like Mick Jagger had already been taken. Originally the Residents thought that hiding their faces and exposing their genitalia would be most appropriate for their culture."

"The only thing I ever heard the Residents say about the eyeballs was 'It looked good.' I don't know if the pun was intentional or not. The eyeballs were originally only going to be used for a short time, for one album, but the idea stuck in people's heads. Since marketing has always been part of what the Residents do, it became necessary to repeat an image, and that was the one that got repeated."

Apparently an overzealous Residents fan wanted a

closer look at one of these four unique globes, and dashed off with it in the blink of an eye following the group's recent Los Angeles performance. The group was not amused, and tears were shed. "The eyeball is being considered nonexistent now; it's been violated," explains Fox. "The Residents have decided that whoever's got it has got nothing but a shell, not the spirit. What they have is superfluous, just a piece of junk."

In concert, the Residents have been wearing black armbands, observing the proper period of mourning for the lost eyeball, while the most bereaved member of the group sports black clothing and a mask and at one point in the performance dons a large black skull.

Upcoming Residents projects include the second installment in their heralded American composers series, which they kicked off in 1983 with *George & James*, a wickedly incongruous pairing that featured the Residents' versions of the music of George Gershwin on one side and of James Brown on the other. Episode two, due for release next fall, will feature Hank Williams paired off against John Philip Sousa.

"He's one of the most solid, totally American composers there is," Fox patiently explains. "He was a true original. He virtually invented American patriotic music, and during his lifetime he was the Beatles; he was the most popular musician of his time. He's like the counterpart to Stravinsky."

"At that time marching bands were where it was at," adds Flynn, "and he had the hottest one. But the music, if you listen to it, is very intricate, very baroque."

The Residents also plan to finally conclude their four-part *Mole Trilogy*, the third part of which is tentatively scheduled for release in the fall of 1987. The *Mole Trilogy* is a multipart opera concerning a world of Chubs, Moles, and Crosses with invented sociology, musicology, politics, and philosophy. The most recent installment of the *Mole* saga involves the Big Bubble, "a prototypical Mole/Chub guitar band."

A cult band. I wonder what it means to be a cult band not directly associated with any particular subculture. Have the Residents resigned themselves to being "just" a cult band?

Flynn: "I don't think so. The Residents' primary interest has always been to more or less do what they want to do, and if that means being a cult band, that's OK. If it came out to being grossly popular, that would kind of be OK too. But they've never resigned themselves to saying, 'This is what we are and this is what we'll always be.' It's more like reality sort of decides that for you, and you'll be able to tell 43 years from now."

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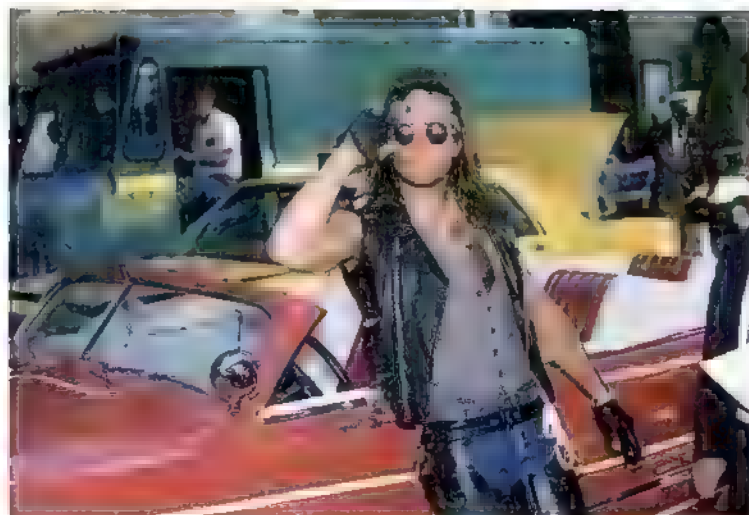
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IT'S ONLY ROTH 'N' ROLL



Eliot Roberts

David Lee Roth was the one who kept heavy metal band Van Halen from getting too heavy. Now he's on his own and taking his show on the road (as they say).

Interview by Scott Cohen

In another life, David Lee Roth was Attila the Hun. He led a bunch of barbarians who looked curiously like Van Halen—around the world, sacking and pillaging as they went. In yet another life, David Lee Roth was Jesse James. His heroes include Muhammad Ali and Ray Kroc.

He got his first radio from his uncle Dave when he was 8, and from that time on, he knew what he wanted to do. He would lay in bed, the radio across the room, a stick taped to the dial so he wouldn't have to get out of bed to change stations.

He met the other members of Van Halen about 10 years later. Their debut album went gold three months after it came out. David and Van Halen made six albums together; each went platinum. The combination was awesome but highly volatile.

Last spring, following an ugly and much publicized fight, David and Van Halen split up. At press time, Dave was about to start filming the rock 'n' roll comedy *Crazy From the Heat*, which he coproduced, cowrote, codirects, and stars in.

Van Halen replaced Dave with singer Sammy Hagar. Dave replaced Van Halen with Steve Vai (guitar), Billy Sheehan (bass), and Gregg Bissonette (drums), and their thrasher metal album is due in July.

In Van Halen, it was Eddie Van Halen who provided the metal, but it was always Dave who provided the Technicolor, the entertainment, the spark, the rock 'n' roll.

We followed Dave.

Left Bank Dave

I like talking. If you want to make conversation, that's better, because I'm going to learn something from it. But if it's monologue, that's OK. I've got a lot on my mind. I'm a big sloganeer. People accuse me of boiling everything down to a one-liner. Where's the drum and cymbal? But I lived up to that. It's not the public image I'm living up to, it's my own mental image of what I should be. I always visualize myself into things I think I should be. I visualize myself as a Vietnam pilot.

"Roscoe Ajax Five, we have him on the screen, Bob. Over." Click. Speak English or die. That character is strong. That character is fearless. That character is Sgt. Rock.

If I'm sitting writing lyrics, I visualize myself as a tubercular Left Bank artist, pouring out his soul, who sweats and bleeds every word, and I try to live up to him in spirit. I have a very certain idea of how rock music should be for me. It should be a Technicolor circus.

Designer Dave

Nothing just descends from the hand of God through the crack in the peeling ceiling of the Marriott Hotel. You got to bring it with you. So when you ask me, "Dave, What about the rock life style?", I'm glad you asked. Look at these pictures. This was my birthday, at Lake McQueeney, and in San Antonio, the bus broke down and 50 guys had to push it out of the swamp, and they're all wearing funny tour jackets that we designed together, and the bus interior is all sharkskin and zebra and fake plastic this and that, and we designed that too.

Dave's Way

In a dive up the street, I met some kid who just moved here from Colorado, has a band, and wanted to know what to do with his demo tape. I said, "Pass on the demo tape." Some guy's sitting in an office, with a satin jacket and an attitude, gets 700 tapes a day. He said, "What do I do?" I said, "Get the magazines, see what clubs are around, and play everywhere that you can, all the time, until they come and discover you." That's how we did it. And if you're entertaining enough or good enough, or if the music is right enough, then the secretary over at Poly Brothers is going to go and check it out. She's going to come back and tell the vice president in charge of Wheatena that, "Hey, I just saw this great band down at this club." He'll say, "Really?" He won't go, but all the rest of the secretaries will. Then when he's surrounded, he's got to plug in sooner or later.

Dave's Promise

I really believe in postal instant press. Go to the magazine, rip off the format, use the print type, whatever, take a picture of yourself jumping off a building, and put it up everywhere. Even if you're not playing, announce that you are. After awhile, people will get used to seeing the name. We used to think, "What kind of audience would want to

see us play?" While Aerosmith was happening, we'd go down to the stadium where they were playing, and I'd be out papering cars, running from the security police, jamming flyers into windshield wipers. Ultimately, we had 14 people running around in the rain. You take this high school, I'll take this. I promised everyone if we'd make it, we'd all do blow together.

Dave's Cave

I was reading about these guys who were going into the deepest cave in the world, something like four miles from the surface, and it wasn't straight down. It also goes sideways, and there's lakes in here. These cats are like two miles down and they have to blow up a little life raft, floating in this little cave, pitch black. Crawl up on the little raft and go to sleep for two hours, wake up in the pitch black, deflate the raft, turn up the regulator, go another mile, then down, then sideways. What motivates people to do that? They had to be airlifted, just to the hole. These guys were in isothermic tents freezing their ass off, just at the top of the hole. It's inspiring as hell to me. Not to go into the hole, but in my own chosen endeavor.

Dave's Fave Van Halen Rumor

My favorite item about Van Halen is that Eddie's new singer has zoomed up out of oblivion and suddenly he's got the microphone. Here's a guy who's bad-mouthing me, and I never even shook his hand. Never met this guy in my life. There was an incident though when I was recording the EP and I was in the studio with Ted Templeman, and Ted was doing Sammy Hagar at the same time. And the telephone call comes, and it's the singer and he's frantic. He just got his first big shot with some song, and he's got the video, and evidently he says the word "ass." Standards and Practices are all over him. They're not going to play his video. There goes the last 10 percent of the career down the toilet. "What am I gonna do?" he asked. Ted turns to me and says, "You're into video. What should he do?" I get on the phone and ask him what's happening on the screen, what's the transition before it? So he tells me the transition. "Well, that's cool. If the guy's slamming the door when that word pops up, just pop in the sound of the door. You can go down to editing. They probably have 20 different doors for you. They're in the Yellow Pages." And that's exactly what happened.

The next thing I know, this guy's all over the press, with mindless word-drool, and they are bad-mouthing me and talking about how they suffered and struggled through the last 12 years, put up with my shit. Poor little Eddie Van Halen. Struggled to survive a continuing onslaught of platinum records and Lamborghinis. Poor little Eddie. Forced to live a lie.

Eddie's Problem

The biggest problem Eddie had with me was, in addition to making the records and going on

tour, I wanted to make the video, make a movie, tour weird places, and get involved in designing the album covers. They just couldn't get their asses out of bed. They usually just couldn't make it through rehearsals for a two-week period without an argument. A year for an album? "That's ridiculous." Want to go on the road? "Sure, for how long?" They don't want to do these four-five-month tours. So, what are we going to do? Play the stadiums, the big places. That way we only have to play the two hot months of the summer. I joke and say you can't hear my jokes in a place like that. Fact of the matter is, you can't hear anything in a place like that. From 20 feet you can't hear. From 80 yards you can't see a thing. Maybe other artists can communicate to 50,000 people. Maybe it's Springsteen. It sure ain't me. I think it's a rip-off to play stadiums. Can't hear, can't see, I got no control over the show.

Rock 'n' roll is probably the best form of entertainment. That's why it lasted so long. I want to do it. Why would they want to do it? Money. I have money. I want to play, tour, go everywhere. Last time I was in Japan was 1979. Why can't we go to Japan? Because we don't make enough money. It's not "We don't make money." It's "We don't make enough." I always figured I got this gig partly because I want to travel, and if I don't make no scratch in Japan, fine. I don't make my money in New York, and if it's not New York, I'll make it in South America. It'll just go up and down, up and down, as my career goes on. You're not going to be popular in all countries all the time unless you're Julio Iglesias.

Video Dave

Half the talent in video looks like they're somebody's sister, or the production girl said, "Hey, Sally, get out there," and everybody cops their role and goes vaudeville with it, right off the bat. The bad guys make mean faces and the girls wiggle, just like our videos, but here's where the difference is: two-thirds of the way exactly — everybody starts dancing. Smack. The kiss of death. See the Pat Benatar video where she's a chick in a house of ill-repute and she sings, "I will never surrender," and this pimp comes up to her, and she's doing the lip sync, but she's not giggling, and how does she teach this guy on behalf of womanhood everywhere that she ain't gonna take this shit no more! She shakes her tits at him and starts dancing. Boom. She sets the movement back three years in the space of 30 seconds. Why is that? Is it because of "Bye Bye Birdie"? When they ran out of dialogue or acting, everybody just danced. You wind up with "A Chorus Line" every third video. It looks like a big Pepsi commercial because everybody's using the same dancers, the same choreographer. The same cat who got the Jordache look is walking Billy Squier right in or out the door, depending on your perspective.

Tribal Dave

Tears for Fears is a lot like Pat Benatar, just a jump





to another kind of music or another kind of T-shirt. Tears for Fears sing, "You shouldn't have to sell your soul." How does he show us that? He starts dancing. Is that ridiculous or is that tribal? Is that a built-in ritual? Does it come with the package? Do human beings do that, or did he just run out of ideas for what to do with his mug or his hands? I'm beginning to think it's built-in, but it makes for lousy theater.

Artistic Dave

Whoever it was who first took a Magic Marker to a photograph was a genius. He altered the face of art permanently and forever.

Traveling With Dave

All the best movies in the world are about people. Ever watch a movie about places? "Watch out for those claws, Bob. They're sharp and they sure can scratch." That's what I should have, a travelogue. The closest I come to that is when I was leading a bunch of Japanese journalists through the house out in Pasadena, and they wanted to do it the way the First Lady does at the White House. There's six of them waiting in a line behind me, and I say, "Did you hear the birds?" Very enthusiastically, I say, "They're beautiful, aren't they?" And they say, "Yes, yes, yes," and I say, "I just put them in. They're made by Sony," and they go, "Ah, Sony," and write it down. I figure I'll shoot a little lower

"Was I just another in the long line? Was Aerosmith really better?"

Dave's Formula for Success

Urban-contempo. It used to be called disco. Janet Jackson's single, "What Have You Done For Me Latek?" is cool. She's Michael Jackson's sister. Now we know where all the hormones in that family went. Great song. Killer drum sound. It was like a whole generation was dependent upon John Bonham to supply that. Or Jimmy Page. Now there's just no competition. Those guys, whoever they are, who are mixing and twitting the knobs, give or take the music, give or take the format, there's no contesting who got the big bass sound. Who has the tribal sounds as far as BIG DRUM. A great deal of that music is just wallpaper for me. It's motivating, 130 beats a minute. But, sooner or later, somebody's going to combine those sounds with rock music, and they'll be on top. If you got a good song, however, it doesn't matter how you sound on the record. The Doors were recording on four-track how many years ago, and they still sound just as full, just as rich, just as entertaining—probably more so than half the product out there today. But if

you're going to sit down with the headset and the CD, all right, it's not going to be quite as satisfying. I love to think I invented the heavy metal tattered and torn thing of tying the T-shirts together and the ripped up spandex with the wrestler haircut. Now I'm beginning to think, "Did I, or was I just another in the long line? Was Aerosmith really better?"

Dave's Light Show

Everybody gets the same paint box. It's only money. You can buy the lights, you can get all the colors you want. Some people paint Picassos and some people fingerprint. Rock 'n' roll is a unique combination. Combination. Not one or the other.

Dave's Heroes

Traditionally, there's always one smoke-bomb band that's popular, just like there's always the female vocalist who's not the greatest looking, but who because of her creativity and personality, blows life into what would be ordinary clay, à la Cyndi Lauper, before that Bette Midler. Blind black people, reformed junkies. These are our heroes.

Wrestling Dave

Professional wrestling is one of the most popular shows on television, therefore professional wrestling

is one of America's favorite sports, if we want to call it that. I think one of the reasons for that is that it's the one sport where you can really blast on the guy when he's down. You can even coldcock the ref if you don't like the call. Now, I'm all for that. That probably tells us more about ourselves than about wrestling. It seems very rock 'n' roll.

Wrestlers are like comedians. Back and forth, from Eddie Murphy and the red leather jumpsuit, work the audience, hit them up. It's almost as if they're trying to hit a rhythm, trying to play drums with their body; air drums. The timing for the jokes is like songs. Three minutes, breathe. Wipe the brow. Sweat. All of a sudden, a glut of new comedians. When we saw the Dave Clark Five we all said, "I got to get a guitar." Now all you got to get is a microphone. It's easier, so I suspect more people will try it. I mean, it's the same wit and wisdom as expressed in the lyrics. Same subject matter. Same attitude, sarcasm, angst.

Synthesizing Dave

Something happened to the synthesizer along the way. It's supposed to be an instrument that had no innate sound of its own. When somebody says synthesizer, you're not supposed to have any idea what that's supposed to sound like. Every time you heard it it would be different. But it's not. They sell stacks and stacks of this million dollar hi-tech audio equipment that alters and regenerates and emulates sound. People go up and buy it and they wind up in a studio. Somebody says, "Listen to this. I can play the Ninth Symphony in dogs barking," and it's great. But when it comes time to make the record, it never winds up on vinyl. When it comes time for the dogs barking, they break into a guitar solo. Another guitar solo.

Fashionable Dave

It was very fashionable, when that band Angst was around, to put down California and L.A. Now I'm seeing books like *How to California*. Pants with names have gone from Calvin Klein, which is decidedly New York, to Jimmy's, which is West Coast sounding to me. Elbow thrashing, skateboard culture. Bicycle motor-cross freestyle championships tomorrow at Venice Beach. Be there! It's all over the airwaves. It's all over the fashion. Life is one big barbeque.

Dave in Mexico

I performed down in Mexico for the Miss Mexico Beauty Pageant. It was real prestigious. Forty girls from the states of Mexico, all the governors, and L.A.'s Mayor Tom Bradley were all there. Some really gorgeous girls, and it was wild, attended by 5,000 people and broadcast via satellite all over the world, 30-40 million people watching. I was the halftime entertainment.

There's a segment when there's a song that's recognizable, and each one of the girls comes running up and does a few steps Madonna-style and I'm thinking, "What's that song? It's so familiar." It's "Wango Tango" by Ted Nugent. Mayor Tom Bradley's sitting there and this song's being blared all over the stadium, and they looped it, so that it goes 20 minutes. "It's a Maserati, it's a big salami." Then I noticed something real special. These girls are on a five and a half foot deck, which would put their asses at right about hand height when it's fully extended. Of course, all the crew is gathered in the best place, in the wings of the stage, down in the dirt where the monitors are. These girls are literally in grasping distance, within shark distance, and everybody, even though five and a half feet away



Bill Warren

"Tears for Fears is a lot like Pat Benatar, just a jump to another kind of music or another kind of T-shirt."

from the real living, breathing thing, is glued to the TV monitor. Every time one of these girls does a little shake, these guys go "oh" like they're in pain, and they're not even paying attention to the real thing.

The screen is better than the real thing!

Casting Dave

I read an interview with someone who was involved with inventing the show *60 Minutes* or something. It was a long, involved interview about his accomplishments, his background, etcetera, etcetera. Very serious in tone. He was very goal-oriented, a very goal-oriented individual. It seemed he accomplished a lot in a relatively short time, and when asked what his next goal was, his last line was: "I want to be the casting director of one of David Lee Roth's videos."

I knew we were onto something.

Dave's Make-Believe Girls

Eighty percent of the girls you see in videos, in movies, and on TV don't even exist. By the time they go through the final casting procedure, make-up is finished, wardrobe gets there, hair does their business, the DP puts the filter on the lens, and you put the Sterno can underneath the lens to get the heatwaves going, and the fan is put on the side to get a little lift in the hair—these girls don't exist. They're art projects.

Dave's Protection

When I went on the road last time, we took these two little people with us, Jimmy and Danny, as my bodyguards. They're probably three and a half, four and a half feet tall. We had them in S.W.A.T. team uniforms. We designed them together. Yeah, S.W.A.T. team. Twelve-battery flashlights. "I don't know if I can carry a 12-battery flashlight." Why not? "Well, it will drag." OK then, handcuffs. "Yeah, we'll wear those." Let's buy some shades. Where's the 7-11? What about karate uniforms? If nothing else, I can wake up in Tuna Fish, Wyoming, nine in the morning, hung over, even if I'm miserable, I can look out the door in the hallway and there goes a midget in a bath towel holding the hand of the girl I was with last night. And I know I'm in rock 'n' roll.

Bali Hai Dave

A lead guitarist is married to a television star. I came back from one of my trips about two years ago. It was a camping trip in Tahiti. Spent two weeks camped on Mt. Bali Hai, where the cloud cover is so rich it's like a ceiling. You could literally put your hand up into it and it disappears up to the elbow. We went into those clouds and stayed there, waiting for the ghosts. When we came back, all sunburnt and everything, we were at the airport, the band's getting ready to go back out on tour. There's the guitar player and there's the television-star wife, the

continued on p. 75

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1. What is the best-selling Beatles album?

- ☐ Sgt. Pepper
☐ Abbey Road
☐ The White Album

2. What is Sting's real name?

- ☐ Peter Gordon
- ☐ Gordon Liddy
- ☐ Gordon Sumner

3. Who wrote The Doors' classic, "Light My Fire?"

- ☐ Phil Spector
- ☐ Jim Morrison
- ☐ Robbie Krieger

Answers:
1. Abbey Road, 2. Gordon Sumner, 3. Robbie Krieger.



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Article by Jessica Berens

Fine Young Cannibals

Picture this if you can: A black man, so handsome he could induce an instant coma, is sitting in the self-consciously chi-chi restaurant of a provincial British hotel in Maidstone, 40 miles outside London. He has ordered risotto, which the "Vegetarian Menu" proudly promises will be tricked out with succulent shards of broccoli, for £6.75. The hotel manager, a gammon-colored young man with wiry white hair sticking out of his head as if erected by static, earnestly suggests the addition of tomato sauce, "as it's a bit dry, sir." The rice arrives, and it's exactly that—rice, in a nouvelle-cuisine portion, speckled with microscopic green dots. The smooth-toned client has spent six hours rehearsing under the dehydrating lights of the local television studio, the piano was out of tune, he was interviewed enthusiastically by a Norwegian magazine, and he has eaten only a cheese sandwich all day. He is starving, and this Ethiopian rice ration is the last straw. He calls for the manager, who arrives, like an unpleasant side effect, wringing his hands as if to squeeze them dry.

"This is ridiculous."
"Sorrysir, sorrysir, sorrysir, sorrysir, sorrysir, sorrysir,

sorrysir," blusters the unfortunate host. "The Vegetarian Menu is not up to scratch tonight. Can I offer you anything else?"

The sultana-shaped eyes gloss over the magazine-sized menu disparagingly.

"Mushroom tartlettes, sir?"
"No."

The recalcitrant singer refuses to eat anything despite exhortation from his colleagues, who are painfully aware that he has to be up at 7:30 the following morning to sing live on a television show for millions of their fans. But by the end of dinner the fast is a joke, and he is being referred to as "Mr. Gandhi."

As the others tremulously dig their forks into dry fruit salad and bemoan the extraordinary ability of British cuisine to poison people, the singer relents and commands oatmeal biscuits, honey, and hot chocolate from the kitchen.

"I'm off to bed now," he announces at 11 p.m., gulping down the last of his dangerous Perrier water. This is the person who spent his childhood pushing the plastic dolls his father gave him under hot water taps so that he could watch their limbs and heads melt.

Roland Gift was chosen from among more than 500 contestants to be the lead singer of Fine Young Cannibals. His voice is somewhere between Otis Redding and Clarence Carter, with a dash of Jimmy Cliff thrown in. The group, formed at the end of 1984, has already enjoyed two U.K. hits. The now-classic "Johnny Come Home," about kids who travel to London hoping to make their fortune, gave David Bowie's "Blue Jean" a run for its money in May last year. "What is wrong in my life," queries the resonant chorus line, "That I must get drunk every night?" Those kids, Gift patiently explains, "find out London is not the myth it's made out to be." This was followed by an irreverent, imaginative arrangement of Elvis's "Suspicious Minds." "I'll probably get assassinated in America," notes Gift unnervously. Fine Young Cannibals covered "Suspicious Minds," a brave move on a debut album, because they believe "nothing is sacred." They also sing the Buzzcocks' "Ever Fallen in Love With Someone You Shouldn't Have?" and Andy Williams's "Can't Take My Eyes Off

(L-R) David Steele, Andy Cox, and Roland Gift

of You." It was the same bravado that propelled them to employ ex-Bronski Beat's Jimmy Somerville to sing on "Suspicious Minds" even though he is homosexual and not particularly fashionable anymore.

Fine Young Cannibals is, quite simply, one of the best bands to arrive on the British music scene since 1977. "Johnny Come Home" is so charismatic, so encouraging, so good, one has to check the credit to make sure it wasn't written in Detroit in the late '50s, it has already been covered by a younger, less known combo, the Three Johns.

Gift used to play saxophone in a punk-reggae group called the Acrylics. "They were a nice bunch of lads when they started, but they soon got corrupted." They were based in Hull, the depressed Midlands town whose life-support system, the fishing industry, collapsed after the Cod War. "I was just grooving around, being a teenager. I used to do anything for a bit of pocket money," he recalls. He dabbled in acting. "There was a community theater workshop, and we used to improvise a lot of our plays. I did it for four years, so I must have liked it." Now, of course, apart from modeling jobs for sophisticated Italian designers, he is being offered film scripts. "The last one I read was about this black guy who could do breakdancing, was really cool, and hung out on the street. He had an Oriental girlfriend and a great talent for clothes designing—but of a

Roland Gift's voice is somewhere between Otis Redding and Clarence Carter, with a dash of Jimmy Cliff thrown in.

cliché really."

He was collared by ex-English Beat members Andy Cox and David Steele, who were looking for "a good vocalist who could affect you." Their advertisement on MTV, surprisingly, did not produce a winner ("We got a lot of heavy-metal singers"), and their search lasted more than a year. "There aren't very many good vocalists. That's why it was difficult," explains Cox, who is so soft spoken you have to press your ears against his mouth. "We didn't give up hope, but we got desperate," adds the more forthright but just as unassuming Steele. The Acrylics had once supported the English Beat, and so, eventually, Gift was telephoned by Andy's girlfriend

Cox, Steele, and Gift all, of course, have SOUL tattooed on their hearts, citing such influences as Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and Al Green. Soul fans know the

meaning of the word VOICE, and Roland Gift actually has one, which, he insists, he "practices to keep in shape" and which "grows on you like fungi." The album manages to lift from Fine Young Cannibals' soul and gospel influences without coming up with the blue-eyed gloss offered by easy-sleaze merchants such as Go West and Hall and Oates. The reason has something to do with Gift's worldly-wise, unpretentious lyrics, which hark back to those old, dead-y familiar subjects dealt with by Pickett, Sledge, and their ilk. "I'm just your love man," explained Otis Redding, "Funny How Love Is," updates Gift. Girl meets boy in the '80s inner city—it might not be flailing legs in the backseat of the car any more, but you can still lose your heart in a neon-coated, one-night-stand motel, and men, still called Johnny, are still all the same. "We're not together, but I'm still alive . . . I'd rather not see you for a very long time . . . Don't send me letters, I don't want to know," sings Gift about the end of a love affair.

I have never been moved to tears by books, films, or, especially, records. "Funny How Love Is" makes me weep every time I hear it. Extraordinary.

But then soul is about pain—"Sometimes I'm tortured, Lord, and driven," said soul father Sam Cooke—and it's about transferring your heart to your throat. Hear the conversation between Wilson Pickett and Ringo Starr reported by Gerri Hirshey in the book *Nowhere to Run*.

Starr: "Can you pullleeeeee tell me what it's all about?"

Pickett: (a.k.a. Wicked):

"SOUUUUUUUU. Soul ain't nothin' but a feelin'."

Starr: "How do you know when you get it?"

Pickett: "Good God."

Roland Gift lived most of his formative years in Birmingham (Duran Duran's hometown), a city where racial tension recently erupted into terrible riots in a neighborhood called Handsworth. The area where Andy Cox still lives was ripped apart by this misdirected frustration. Trouble had been brewing, like a faulty coffee machine, for years. In the early '80s it was met head-on by the 2-Tone movement, a musical force that propelled multiracial bands like the Specials and the English Beat to the forefront, where the latter will be remembered for songs like "Mirror in the Bathroom" and "Stand Down Margaret." The English Beat split because they hated each other, and singer Dave Wakeling formed General Public. "The classic mistake you can make in this business," advises Steele now, "is to hate each other, release bad songs, and tour too much."

So what of Gift, the half-caste son of a carpenter and a nurse? How has racism affected him personally?

"There are people who call you names, and there are people who avoid any mention of color. I find that the weirdest of all—people trying to be polite."

"Like not asking for any blackberries," suggests Steele in tones one would expect from someone who admits to collecting Batmobiles as a child

"Johnny Come Home" is so charismatic, so good, one has to check the credit to make sure it wasn't written in Detroit in the late '50s.

"I find 'colored' a really odd word. I'm not fond of that," says Gift. "And when you go to people's houses, their parents talk to you about boxers and athletes."

Fine Young Cannibals named themselves after the '50s jazz film *All the Fine Young Cannibals*, starring Robert Wagner, and they look like one of those retro movie posters, dressed as they are in tapered drainpipes, polo shirts, striped cardigans, and fake zebra-skin brothel creepers. The sartorial look is pure Flip. They are on their way now, since "Johnny Come Home" was picked up by one of the more adventurous U.K. rock shows, which led to immediate response from record companies that previously had shown signs only of deafness. "Nowadays," confesses Roland, "I get stopped a lot in the street. 'It makes you miss buses.'"



Anten Corbin

TV star. She says to me, "So where did you go on vacation this time, Dave?" Well, we just got back from Bali Hai Mountain in the South Pacific. Did you ever hear of it? She says no. I say OK and go into overdrive. Television star I say, "Uh, you ever see the play *South Pacific*?" No. "Ever hear of the movie?" No. "Come on, you don't remember her beckoning to the French guy and singing, 'Bali Hai is calling'?" No. I go into hyper drive. "You know the band Led Zeppelin?" Yeah. "Remember the tune, 'Immigrant Song'?" She said, "Yeah." I says, "He probably stole that melody from 'Bali Hai'." To this day I'm sure she thinks Page wrote *South Pacific*.

Respecting Dave

Now we see a lot of people in pop music and on TV who are famous for being famous. I guess I skipped a groove when I was 16. Another visualization: the man who came from nowhere and goes home to no one. I always felt that. I always had a real good time with it. Usually those characters are very severe, very Clint Eastwood, Peter Townshend, serious, and I always laughed about it. I know it's just visualization. I'm living it. I'm breathing it, but I know where it came from. Consider the source. You got to laugh. Henceforth, I don't get no respect.

The word respect is thrown around the world of rock 'n' roll as often and as erroneously as in boxing. "Um, why is he hitting him with the right in the face, Bob?" Well, he's teaching him some respect. "How come they're not hitting each other, Bob?" They respect each other too much. Well, I'd like to thank my corner man and my trainer and my next fight will be a unification of the title and I will get the respect that I deserve. All of us in rock do it.

Three things all of us in rock bands say: (1) This album is much better than the last one. It's much more rock, (2) We haven't changed. We don't ever want to change; and (3) This is just a rough mix.



Mark Weiss



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TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.

On the streets of Hollywood, a lost generation of kids lives as if there is no tomorrow. For some, there isn't.

Article by Robert Keating

Photography by
Moshe Brakha
and Edward Rasen

These photographs were shot on the streets of Hollywood. None of the people depicted are mentioned in the story.

The energy of Hollywood on a Saturday night is such that the slow passage into Sunday morning is hardly noticed until it's over. Suddenly, Hollywood Boulevard is as still as the hills above it, lifeless in the damp morning chill except for a handful of workers who sweep the previous night's debris from the Walk of Fame.

On such a morning last July, the pleasant view looking up Gower Street from where Benny Goodman's star marks the end of the Walk of Fame was of the sun's pink just touching the enormous HOLLYWOOD sign framed high in the hills by two church steeples just below the Hollywood Freeway. But the serenity was destroyed by the mournful wail of police sirens and the chilling pulse of an ambulance's emergency light.

Detectives waded through thick brush and bramble alongside the freeway's Gower Street off ramp and found the body of a pretty 18-year-old girl with light freckles and short red hair. Face up and dead, she was naked except for an unlaced pair of worn-out blue-green high-top sneakers. Her body was sprawled sideways across an old, urine- and vomit-stained mattress from which her head dangled into the bottles and debris. She had been dead for about five hours.

It started out as a routine call. Another vagrant found dead in the Gower Gulch section of Hollywood — the "hobo jungle," as it's known. Several blocks from the scene, police officer Bobby Valesquez sat in his car, the motor idling, watching the sun come up in Hollywood. He was just going on duty when he got the call. From the moment Valesquez arrived at the scene, he knew it was going to be a long morning.

"I don't think this is usual," he radioed to Hollywood Division's homicide unit, "not with these surroundings and clothes scattered all over the place."

While detectives from homicide took pictures and gathered evidence from the scene, Detective Rick Swanston talked to the vagrants who sleep on this overgrown slope of garbage, sending some to division headquarters for further questioning.

Sunday worshippers began filing into the church across the street as the crowd of curious onlookers





continued to grow. Valesquez decided not to go back to the station immediately. Suddenly, one of the hobos pointed at a girl who was pushing her way through the crowd.

"That's her!" he said. "That's the girl who brought her here."

Connie Lantz was 23 years old, barely 5 feet 4 inches tall, and weighed no more than 125 pounds. Her long, sandy hair was uncombed and the pupils of her blue eyes were constricted from a dose of "loads," a combination of codeine and Doriden. She wore dirty jeans and a soiled shirt. According to Swanston, the cops knew Connie as "a prostitute with needle marks up and down her arms."

Valesquez guided Connie to the body and, lifting the sheet, asked, "Who is this girl?"

"Her name is Janice," said Connie.

"Janice who?"

"I don't know her last name," said Connie. "She's a friend of a friend of mine."

Connie was taken to Hollywood headquarters for further questioning. She gave the cops the phone number of Janice's roommate, Cindy.

In the Silver Lake section of Los Angeles, just outside Hollywood, toward downtown, Cindy, who had been waiting for Janice all night, was ready to tell her off for constantly screwing up on her promises when the phone rang.

"Do you know somebody named Janice?" asked Swanston.

Fuck.

"Is she there with you?" asked Cindy. "Is she in trouble? Did Janice get busted again?"

"Not exactly," said Swanston. "Let me put someone on the phone."

"Hi, Cindy," said Connie. "Janice is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yeah, dead. She OD'd. We got loaded together and she OD'd."

Taking the phone back, Swanston asked, "Can you tell me who she is?"

"Yeah," said Cindy, starting to cry. "Her family lives in Glendale. Her name is Janice Hughes."

"THE Janice Hughes?" said Swanston.

People die of drugs every day. A lot are kids, mostly poor kids — on the streets of Seattle, in a fleabag hotel in Times Square — and hardly anyone notices. Unless they're a special case. Janice Hughes was a special case.

She was a bright, pretty, charming girl from one of the richest families in America. But she abandoned that world of privilege for the streets, the dark clubs, the transient life, drugs, ex-cons, prostitutes, and other kids like herself who had also dropped out of their lives in a search for something or as an escape from despair. A lost generation. Our lost generation.

Every night in Los Angeles, kids like Janice flock to Hollywood. Some to play, some to stay. For them, Hollywood is a place to live as if there is no tomorrow. And sometimes there isn't.

Their psychological ties are to the '50s — not the happy days of malt shops, cruising the boulevards in low riders, backseat sex, and swooning ballads, but the '50s of nihilism. The new game of chicken is: how many drugs can you do without dying. How close to the edge can you get before you fall off.

This is no '60s dropout scene. No romantic drug idylls in elysian fields. No psychedelic drug experiments. Drugs aren't for experimentation, they're for getting wasted. Concerts don't turn into happenings, they turn into riots. These kids haven't had a Woodstock, just massive brawls like the one at Baces Hall in L.A., where the windows were demolished before the bands even took the stage and the cops, using the spotlights of police helicopters circling above, chased bands of punks into the quiet streets nearby.



The new game of chicken is: how many drugs can you do without dying. How close to the edge can you get before falling off.



These kids don't take off their costumes at night, or arrive on the scene in their parents' cars. They look past the theatrics of music. What they want is meaning — not the soft poetry of Bob Dylan, but the harsh realities of bands like Fear. Their isolation is reinforced by the rejection that surrounds them.

So many kids have arrived on the scene in Hollywood that on any given night most of the people arrested or detained by the police are youngsters between 12 and 20, most of them living in the streets.

"It's a big problem," said Lieutenant Ed Hocking, chief of detectives at the Hollywood Division. "A lot of them are runaways, and they're from right in the area. The kid's family might be well off, but he doesn't have a dime. He's on the street, panhandling, living in abandoned buildings, just trying to survive."

"It's worse in the summer. We get what we call weekend runaways," he said. "It's like a fantasy for them. They come down here and think, 'This is great. Everybody gets along. I'm accepted here.' They're playing in the big scene. But in short order they're reduced to survival. And once you hit bottom, there's only a couple of things you can do — usually push drugs or sell yourself. So they end up going home, or they become a victim."

Sitting behind his desk in a roomy office adorned with pictures of D.ity Harry that Clint Eastwood autographed for him, Hocking, who talks like Harry, bristles at the suggestion that there's a certain thrill, a glamour, to the street life.

"You want to see glamour?" he says, pulling out a binder filled with photos. "I'll show you how glamorous it is." Hocking shoves across his desk a series of chilling Polaroids of another body, nude, face up on a carpeted floor. John Belushi looks like a beached whale. Bloated, blemished, and dead — the glamour is gone. Hocking has assembled a series of photo binders into a rogues' gallery of self-destruction.

"A lot of these kids come down here innocent," says Hocking. "Then one thing leads to another and

Edward Rosen

they're in over their heads."

Still, they keep coming. They arrive in Hollywood from towns tucked in the mountains and canyons for miles around. Like Annie, a small, pretty girl from an exclusive section of Woodland Hills. At 15 she was out driving her parents' car. Suddenly she stopped, put it in park, opened the door, and ran off to Hollywood — with its music, abandoned buildings, and Salvation Army clothes. Annie spent her afternoons spare-changing along the boulevards. At night she moved in with some punk rockers who let her make a room out of a closet.

"A lot of kids come from middle-class, fucked-up families," says one of Annie's punk friends, who has purple spiked hair, razor cuts up and down her arms, and a parent on each coast. "In England, punk is a poverty-level lifestyle. But these kids here have been driven to madness. Broken families. Things like that. Now they're into drugs, slicing up their arms, constantly beating their heads against the wall, and not understanding anything. I mean, why did my daddy have to have sex with me? Why is my mother a schizophrenic, suicidal person? It's all psychological. That's why everybody's so fucking crazy."

Saturday night in Hollywood, in the summer, near midnight, is a celebration of decay, a carnival of street life. The hookers who line Sunset Boulevard boldly wave down cars, and young boys wait in the shadows along Santa Monica Boulevard, willing to take a chance for a couple of dollars. It is a mecca of the fast life of nightclubs, cabarets, and music.

Rock is the pulse of Hollywood late into Saturday night. Pounding out of the clubs that encircle this pocket of Los Angeles, from a record-business showcase like the Roxy, up on the Sunset Strip, to a shoestring joint like the Anticlub, which books fringe acts in its low-rent neighborhood hard by where the Hollywood Freeway descends toward downtown.

On Hollywood Boulevard, rock defines the night. Police cars park, their lights flashing, in the middle of the street, pulling over cars filled with screaming punks, joyriders, and middle-class misfits, plucking them from a flood of traffic that creeps past the peep shows, Mann's Chinese Theatre, leather and bondage shops, and the Hollywood Wax Museum. The boulevard is like a small town's main drag — *American Graffiti* filmed in Times Square. Horns wail. Music blares. Bodies dangle and tumble from car windows. No car has fewer than four people in it.

Here, Hollywood is constant motion. Crowds of punks and skinheads jam the sidewalk of Vine Street — the overflow from concerts at the Palladium, which sometimes have more action outside than in. Along the boulevard, young kids panhandle beside old winos, crowds move in and out of theaters and clubs, a swarm of Hell's Angels sets up camp, drinking beer and pressing against their women, their bikes parked in a row more than 50 deep.

For the rich, Hollywood Boulevard might be a late-night dinner at Musso and Franks. For the lonely, it's sometimes a quick duck past the flashing neon lights and into the Pussycat Theatre with its 25-cents-per-booth peep show next door. But for the kids who flock to Hollywood, it is a scene to be swallowed whole, an experience that surrounds you and makes you surrender. Again and again.

On warm summer nights in Hollywood, Janice Hughes was one of the faces moving through the madness. She was comfortable here. She knew it well. But she was from a place 10 miles and a world away from Hollywood — Glendale.

Janice was adopted when she was six weeks old. She must have wondered who her real parents were — especially since she didn't get along with her foster mother. But she loved her foster father, Paul Hughes, who treated her with genuine warmth and affection.

Janice was always amazed at how much money her



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"I have this really strange attraction to degeneracy," says 16-year-old Janie. "It's self-destructive, but it's hard to get away from."

family had. It was something she played down, if it had to be known at all. She was an heiress to the vast Hughes supermarket empire, a chain of 44 stores scattered throughout Los Angeles and the surrounding counties, with yearly sales of more than \$600 million on Janice reportedly would have inherited \$4 million on her 21st birthday.

Janice was uncomfortable with wealth. She was more concerned with being part of the crowd. This tomboy who was the first girl to break into local Little League when she was in fourth grade spent much of her life trying to blend in. As Catholic grammar school gave way to public high school, baseball gave way to Jimi Hendrix and the Doors, and the wealthy section of Glendale, where her parents and grandparents lived — with its expensive, white-stuccoed houses with red clay tile roofs — gave way to Hollywood, where she became part of the fabric. To her parents, Janice had fallen through a cruel looking glass.

"Hollywood just fascinated Janice," says her father, Paul, in his office at the sprawling Hughes headquarters. In a soft, thoughtful voice, he still gropes for understanding. "It used to be just terrifying for us. But it didn't bother her. She just kept going

the wealthiest person in the school," says Karen Reinhart, who met Janice in the seventh grade and became her best friend, "hanging around with people who didn't have any friends. She hung around with the skinny kid with acne, the people nobody wanted."

A friend of Janice's started her on drugs in the eighth grade, but it was at Providence High the following year that, says Karen, "all the problems started." Janice began selling to her friends. It put her right in the middle of the most popular crowd. "They were all experimenting," says Karen. "Everyone was having fun."

In 1980, a teacher caught Janice dealing black beauties from her usual spot outside the study hall. Brought before the principal, the frightened 12-year-old exposed most of her friends. Her classmates started calling her a narc. Expelled from Providence, Janice enrolled at Glendale's Hoover High, traveling through childhood with a knapsack full of contradictions.

"It was a turning point for her," says a friend. "She was so embarrassed when it got out that she rattled. She was scared to death. And she promised herself that no one was ever going to think she was scared again."

Janice now turned so far inward that she began acting out. A shy girl who needed to be noticed, she asserted herself through notoriety. Gifted with an IQ in the 130s, she became a troublemaker. Her greatest fear was that people would see how scared she was, so she put on a face of undaunting daring. She was an heiress who needed to prove she was common.

At Hoover, Janice lost herself in the "stoner" crowd. By the time she squeaked through graduation, the days of pot and pills were gone. She was mainlining heroin. Janice left high school with a diploma, a string of juvenile drug arrests, and problems that wouldn't go away. Ultimately, the conflicts within Janice came down to the most basic of all—deciding whether to live or die.

She turned for acceptance and approval to people who wouldn't judge her harshly. She rode her bicycle to the beaches at Santa Monica and sat in the dawn talking to the bums there. On Hollywood Boulevard she befriended bag ladies and derelicts. Unable to directly feel the tragedy inside her, she got in touch with it through these sad people. "Janice loved these people tremendously," says a friend. "She identified with the poor and the homeless. The rejected."

Janice was seen leaning against the window at Frederick's of Hollywood and taking slugs from a wine's bottle. She was soon spending nights in cheap hotel room "parties" and sharing needles with street junkies. A full-time addict now, she would disappear for long periods on dope-filled odysseys through places she never remembered. Once she was gone so long that her brother, Paul, and one of her friends walked Hollywood Boulevard for three days in an unsuccessful effort to find her.

Early one morning at the end of summer 1984, a cop pulled Janice over in Pasadena and found her high on drugs and liquor. After spending the night in jail, she was put on probation and her license was suspended. Her life was so clearly out of control that her parents began putting her in hospitals. Not yet 18, she was committed to programs from Los Angeles to Palm Springs.

At Coldwater Canyon Hospital — an expensive treatment facility that has recently become a favorite of professional athletes — Janice's rebel spirit raged. She started fires that triggered smoke detectors, causing locked doors on the ward to open automatically and permitting her to break out. She would disappear for a day and return loaded and remorseful, sometimes smuggling tabs of acid and other drugs into the unit.



back down there. Back into it. Hollywood was her Disneyland."

From the start, Janice Hughes fit into Hollywood. She dyed her hair, first platinum blond, then shocking red, wore it short on the sides and really long on the top, and shaved a little bald spot behind one of her ears. "Her way of saying 'fuck you,'" says a friend.

If Hollywood is a state of mind, then it was Janice's state of mind more than her looks that allowed her to fit in. She was wandering around with a world of troubles in her head, haunted by her ambiguous childhood. She said she had been mistreated. "Why did they adopt me," she would cry to a friend, "if they were going to hate me?"

Feeling unloved and neglected, fearful that her parents were rejecting her when she was sick or in trouble, jealous of the love and attention her mother showered on other kids, Janice looked to Hollywood as an escape.

She rebelled in school, too. "Here was probably

As part of Janice's therapy, counselor Steven Swain (a pseudonym) drove her to a nearby Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Janice, of course, disappeared. She returned to the hospital at 2 in the morning, drunk on scotch.

Still, Swain grew to love her like a daughter. "If I had a daughter," he says, "I'd want someone with a personality like Janice's. She was so-endearing."

Janice was released from Coldwater Canyon just before New Year's 1985, and again took up residence on the streets.

There, her adventures in drugs grew wilder. She ran with ex-cons and junkies. Like a lot of the girls she met in the clinics — pretty, bright, rich girls — Janice dated the most physically imposing men, the tough characters. They used to call it "good girls love bad boys."

"She had an obvious attraction toward the criminal element," says one of her former counselors. "She was into the people who had done time in jail."

One was a guy named Pete, a tall, powerful ex-con who had boxed in prison. Pete was a Mexican who had tattoos and wore shirts buttoned to the top. He held down a job at a nearby Ford plant.

"I really like Pete," Janice told her counselors. "But I can't stay straight and see him at the same time. When I'm with him, I'm gonna use."

From Hollywood Janice would travel with Pete and his friends to the barrio in East L.A. But even Janice, the girl who refused to show fear, would sometimes panic. In early-morning phone calls she would plead with friends to "please come get me" from sleazy hotels and broken-down neighborhoods.

One night in early March, Janice's call came from the corner of Western and Hollywood — an area of billiard halls, cheap movies, and drugs. This time she'd gone too far. Shortly after Steven Swain located her, she passed out. She was breathing only about four times a minute. Her pulse weakened and she turned blue. Doctors at the emergency room said it was a miracle she survived.

Janice's mother came in the next day to see her. As Steven Swain explained how they'd gone into Hollywood and saved her child, Jan Hughes looked at him and said, "I don't know why you bothered. She's only going to kill herself sooner or later anyway."

From the hospital Janice was released to a rehabilitation center. A month later, in April, she tried to kill herself by cutting her wrists. She broke so many rules that soon they too put her out.

"She didn't want to talk about it," says her younger sister, Teresa, of the suicide attempt. "She just got so low, she didn't want to live anymore. She was scared."

In late spring Janice's parents banned her from their home for repeatedly stealing money and expensive items and inviting her strange friends in to get high. Afterwards, her father changed all the locks and installed an alarm system.

Janice truly lived in Hollywood now. She drifted in and out of different circles, taking advantage of the loose arrangements that were common on the punk rock scene. Punks were the only ones who mattered.

"I have this really strange attraction to degeneracy," says 16-year-old Janie. "It's self-destructive, but it's hard to get away from." Last summer, Janie finally shot up heroin for the first time. She went up on the roof of an empty building in Hollywood with her best friend, tied up under the stars, found a vein, and all her fears subsided. Now she's comfortable with it.

But the drug of choice on the boulevard is loads. Identical to a heroin high, but safer. With heroin, you get burned all the time. People will sell you crap, like baking soda. Loads are prescription drugs — cheap and available on the black market — so you know what you're getting: four codeine and two Dorden.

Around Mann's Chinese Theatre, a hot tourist spot with a thin, glitzy veneer, punk rockers, runaways,

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and junkies had found a magnet for all of their alienation. By spring, Janice was spending most of her time hanging around the Chinese Theatre, moving in and out of broken-down apartment buildings, making connections, crashing, listening to music with friends, hanging out.

Through one of her friends she met George Levine, brother of movie producer Joseph E. Levine. George is a grouchy old man who lives in the Madison Apartments right behind the Chinese Theatre. His place is like a ladies' powder room for young girls on the Hollywood streets. "You can use his bathroom, wait around for your friends, even run up George's telephone bill," says one regular. "He doesn't mind." It was exactly 10 years ago at the Egyptian Theatre, a few blocks down Hollywood Boulevard, that George met a svelte black 12-year-old girl from Indiana named Lisa and took her home with him.

In Hollywood, streetwise young girls on the boulevards introduce themselves to lonely older men, and an arrangement of sorts is reached. The girls get food, shelter, a telephone, and maybe some money. The elderly men get companionship, vicarious excitement, and maybe sex, though often they are simply exploited.

Janice got in the habit of stopping by George's apartment — even scoring a first by going on a date with him to the movies. On one of these visits, she met a young prostitute named Connie Lantz, and the two hit it off right away. Connie had literally grown up on the streets of Hollywood; she had been turning tricks since she was 12.

Drugs and tricks were the only things that Connie really knew. She thought that everybody got kidnapped and beaten up, or had their arms cut open, or got hit by cars. For Connie, these things were just a part of life. But there was nothing hard about her. She had a quiet softness, really. She was just a sweet kid who never caught a break. Her mother was an alcoholic, and her father, a former L.A. cop, was plain crazy. Janice loved to listen to her stories of this crazy but funny man who got religion and drove a car through the front of a porn store because it represented anal sex. Or the time he was in a crowd of Japanese tourists in Santa Monica when some planes flew overhead and he broke all their eyeglasses, thinking it was Pearl Harbor. One day, Connie's father told her that he wasn't her dad; she was actually his mother.

His name was Royal, and he lived with some friends in the bushes near the freeway. Connie promised to introduce him to Janice, who was fascinated by the man who lived in the bushes.

At the beginning of last June, Janice began another period of trying to straighten out. She moved into a "sober house" in Silver Lake, but she would still sneak out to the corner and sit on the curb with a bottle of wine, drinking by herself.

After making an appointment with her parents, Janice and a friend drove to their house to pick up her 10-speed. Paul Hughes was pained to tell her that the bike was broken.

"That's OK," she responded stiffly. "I'll get it fixed."

He carried the bicycle out for her and together they tied it to the back of her friend's car. Then they stood awkwardly in front of the house, neither knowing what to say to the other. Finally they said their goodbyes, and he went back inside. Some minutes passed before Janice broke down crying. "I miss him so much," she sobbed. "I miss him unbelievably."

Some time in early July, Janice, still filled with guilt over the embarrassment she'd caused her father by screwing up her jobs at Hughes Market — not showing up, stealing, showing up loaded — took a night stockroom job at Lucky Markets, a competitor. It was easier there because she was just plain Janice.



By the time Janice graduated from Hoover High, the days of pot and pills were behind her. She was mainlining heroin.

A week later, Karen Reinhart visited Janice. They avoided talking about troubles. Instead they talked about growing up together — the pranks they used to play, cartoons they had planned to make, how when they grew up Janice would be an animator and Karen the director.

"You know," Janice suddenly said, "I wasn't straight the last time I talked with you. But I am now."

Karen didn't believe or disbelieve her, she just recalled all the other times Janice had said those very words.

"I'm going to straighten up and go to college, Karen," she said. "I'll take some classes at Glen Oaks Community."

Janice talked about being hospitalized. "You know, those people who drop out of those places and go back to drugs are so stupid," she said.

On a Wednesday in mid-July, the day before Janice was to get her first paycheck at Lucky, she telephoned her younger sister, Teresa — one of the few people who never fucked her over. She wanted the two of them to go out. To a movie, maybe.

Instead, Janice got her mother on the phone. "I just want to spend some time with Teresa," she told her.

"I don't want you to see her," came the response. "I don't even want Teresa around you. You two aren't going to the movies, she isn't going over to stay the night. None of this is going to happen. Teresa's 15, she's going to stay home."

That night, Janice stood before a group of people at an AA meeting, holding back her tears as she talked about the phone call. "I've been straight for weeks," she said. "I've got a job. So where's the support? Where's the reward?"

The next day, she got her paycheck and moped around the house. She doodled and wrote a poem:

You know, someday I wake up and it's like great to be alive

Life's beautiful

I say, "Why do I ever let things get me upset?"

And usually those days are OK

On Saturday morning, July 20, Janice decided not to attend an AA softball game, saying she was going to ride her bike to the beach in Santa Monica. She called a friend and made plans to attend a drug abusers meeting at a church the following day.

Janice's next call was to her sister Teresa.

"Teresa," Janice said, "I want you to come out here and spend the night. I want you to be with me this weekend."

Teresa said she'd ask their parents. After some time she returned. "I can't. Mom said you need time away from the family," Teresa explained. "Time to let your counselors help you with your problems."

Janice was crushed. A short while later, she called Connie Lantz.

"Let's go out today," she said. "Maybe you could take me to your connection and then we could play in Hollywood."

In the past Connie had refused to help Janice get any drugs because she knew she was supposed to be cleaning up her act. Still, Janice had kept calling and calling. Today, she finally wore Connie down.


"OK," said Connie. "You're a big girl. You can make your own decisions. What do you want to get?"

"I don't care, heroin if we can find it. Anything."

"I know somebody who's got loads."

"Great. I'll come right down."

Flying downhill on Alvarado Street on a bright, hot summer afternoon is a great sensation, and the view of MacArthur Park below, with its pond and spray of water, is magnificent. But at the bottom of the hill, cutting across the park toward the Park Wilshire Hotel, where Connie lived, the park has a more



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Edward Rosen

Janice became a troublemaker. She was an heiress who needed to prove she was common.

ominous, threatening appearance. Like the Park Wilshire, which up close shows the years of neglect and disrepair, the park is not a place one would visit casually at night.

Janice saw it differently, telling Connie on this, her first visit, that it must be a great place to live. She left her bike in Connie's studio, and, on the last day of her life, she and Connie set off, thumbs out, for Hollywood.

They arrived around noon and scored.

By two o'clock Saturday afternoon, Hollywood Boulevard was in full swing. Janice and Connie strolled along, people-watching, their giggles turning to guffaws as the loads started to kick in. Connie wore torn jeans and a T-shirt. Janice had on some old running shorts over her leotard, a knapsack on her back, and ratty blue-green high-top sneakers. In and out of shops they went, Janice sipping first one then another beer in the hot sun. By the time they reached Greco's Pizza Parlor across from Frederick's of Hollywood, they were pretty spaced. Greco's was the new hangout, because the cops shut down most of the others, but Connie thought they should get off the boulevard. Janice begged Connie to introduce her to her father—the man who lived in the bushes. They hitched a ride to Gower Street, then took a left at Benny Goodman's star, shuffling up the steep incline.

Connie's father wasn't around, so they climbed onto the low wall on the church patio across from the Hollywood Freeway to wait, sipping their beers, laughing and carrying on. Every now and then one of them went heels up backwards, falling off the brick wall into the bed of flowers.

As dusk set in, Janice and Connie made their way

around the tall cyclone fence across the street at the off ramp from the Hollywood Freeway. Stepping between the Wrong Way Do Not Enter and One Way signs, they stumbled through the thick brush to a spot where the hobos had spread out some half-dozen mattresses.

There they sat amid the assorted wine bottles, empty cans, and useless bric-a-brac that hobos tend to treasure. Janice told Connie that once she'd promised a counselor that she'd go to a meeting at the church across the street, but instead she'd gone to a local store, where a 7-year-old Chicano kid sold her a balloon filled with heroin, which she immediately shot up. Their mood saddened as they drifted farther into the loads high.

By the time the hobos began arriving, Janice had passed out. Connie whispered that she was going to a friend's place and left Janice sleeping there. And some time in the next several hours, Janice Hughes, who had tasted pain, pot, pills, heroin, and loads, tasted death.

When Connie came back at dawn, the place was aglow with red and blue lights. She looked at the naked body arched across the old mattress and told the police that the girl's name was Janice, but she didn't know her last name.

continued on p. 87

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"Hollywood just fascinated Janice," says her father. "It was her Disneyland."

TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A. continued from p. 84

A few months later, across town, Connie lies back on the bed in her fleabag hotel room. Hollywood's changed since she began working the street more than 10 years ago, she says. "I'm used to people dying," she says. "A lot of people I was real close to have died. I just took down a picture of my best friend who died. I couldn't take looking at it."

But these days, she says, these kids who have everything come to Hollywood to live on the street. "What they don't understand is that the people who grew up in Hollywood—like me and my best friend Nancy—really didn't have anything. But a lot of us are really pretty conventional kids. We'd give anything to have our lives straighten out and live in a house in the Valley."

Connie's nodding off. She shot up a little while ago in some shack on a dead-end street in East L.A. where Spanish kids play stickball in the pitch dark, dodging stray dogs, well into the night. She lights up a Camel Light that reeks of chemicals because the guy in the shack did her a favor and laced it with PCP.

"Janice was such a sweet, sweet kid," she says, remembering with a stoned sadness. "Kinda naive, but not. She was a trip. Talking to bag ladies, feeling sorry for poor people—bums. But she wanted out of her skin. When she was a little kid somebody must have told her she was a piece of shit too many times, and she just bought it."

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Josh Chazara

Black Flag was my favorite band. I constantly played what few records they had out. I met them in the spring of 1981 and hung out with them for most of their brief stay when they visited Washington, D.C., to play two sets at the 9:30 Club.

Chuck Dukowski gave me a demo tape of their unreleased music. Every morning before I went to work, I would play that tape: "Damaged," "Police Story," "No More," and their version of "Louie, Louie." I loved and hated the tape. The tunes were great and the words said what I was feeling. But I hated it because I wanted to be the singer! I mean, Dez was great, but still . . .

Summer 1981

Black Flag played in New York. They didn't have any shows in the D.C. area, so I went to New York to see them. I got there early and me, Greg, and Chuck hung out and talked most of the afternoon. That night, they played. They were great. After the show, the band went across town to play for free at a small after-hours club. Of course, I went along. I had to be at work in six hours, and I had a five-hour drive. I went to the stage and asked them to play "Clocked In" to send me on my way. Dez said, "This is called 'Clocked In.' It's for Hank, because he's got to go to work now." The band laid into the song. I got onstage, took the microphone, and sang "Clocked In" with Dez. Sure felt good. I left the club to drive home. I finished the rest of the set in the driver's seat.

Days later, I'm working at the ice cream store and I get a phone call. It's Dez. The band is in New York taking a few days off, and they want to know if I want to come up and jam with them. I don't really understand what they mean, but they are paying the train ticket, so I go.

The next morning we all meet at the Odessa, a restaurant in the East Village. Greg tells me that Dez wants to play guitar, so they are looking for a singer. Would I want to try it out? I could not believe my ears.

We went to Mi Casa rehearsal studios and set up. I told them the songs to play. What words I knew, I sang. The ones I didn't, I faked. We did two sets. At the end we all kind of looked at each other. Chuck said, "Well?" I said, "Well, what?" "ARE YOL GOING TO JOIN OR NOT?" he yelled.

December 1981, England

We were broke. We were hungry. We were cold. We were miserable. We had a show in Manchester. Early one morning, we drove our rented van from London north to Manchester. We spent all of our remaining dough on petrol just to make the gig. At Manchester Polytech, we learn that we are playing with Chelsea, a well-known English punk rock band. For some strange reason, Black Flag was headlining. I smelled trouble. We didn't even have an album out in England, just the "Six Pack" EP, and we were headlining. Someone, somewhere was going to be pissed off.

We unloaded the equipment and went upstairs to the dressing room to relax and find some food. (I should mention at this point that the dressing room was huge and was to be used by all the bands on the bill that night.) OK, so I fall asleep on the floor next to the wall, out of the way of everything and everyone. Fine.

I am woken up by a boot in my ribs. I grab my side and look up at Gene October, the singer in Chelsea. "Excuse me, Los Angeles. Sorry about that. I just tripped over you." Yeah, right, but that's cool. I go back to sleep. I get woken up again by the same boot. "Oh, Los Angeles, so sorry." I still remain cool, me being the only Flag in the room, which is now full of Chelsea and crew. The jerk starts talking to me. "You really don't have any good music in America, do you, Los Angeles? The Dickies and the Ramones. I mean they are a load of shit, aren't they, Los Angeles?" What a drag! I had two Chelsea records at home! I just stare and nod my head.

Hours later, Chelsea is onstage. Gene is talking to the crowd between songs: "There are some short-haired hippies from Los Angeles in the crowd tonight. It's Black Flag. I want you to get them." The crowd cheers. Me and Ian MacKaye (then singer in the D.C.-based Minor Threat who visited England with us) walk into the crowd smiling and waving, saying, "Here we are, come and get us." No one took the challenge. Personally, I was kind of hoping one or five of them would jump us so I could have had the pleasure of taking nine days of misery out on their faces.



It was pretty funny seeing them carrying stuff out, kicking their way through the crowd. The roadies figured that the audience were only New Yorkers and were used to that treatment.

Finally, we get to play. The kids in the crowd were real cool. I thought we were doing OK. This one boy kept spitting on me for the whole set. I didn't do any thing about it. . . . trying to be a good chap, you know. Well, that was too much for old Ian. He smacked the bloke upside his head. After it happened, the entire audience took a few steps back. I apologized for Ian's actions, even though I thought what he did was right on. Now as I write this I have to put my pen down because I am laughing so hard—Ian, that was so hot, man! You blew that guy's shit away! That was great, brother.

Of course, we have no place to stay, no blankets, nothing. We find these two girls, who agree to put us up in their flat. "Don't get your hopes up, we're on the dole," says one girl. Fine. We arrive at the flat and it's a spit-level apartment! The place is nicer than anyplace I have lived since I lived with my mom at her place. But no heat, no hot water, no food. I wiped the spit off my hair, face, and chest as best I could with a washcloth and went to sleep on the floor in my coat. I kept waking because of the cold and the dampness. Finally, morning arrived and we drank all the hot tea the girls would let us have and then we got in the truck and left for the next show.

February 1983, Austria

The previous night in Munich, we had played the Lowenbrau Keller, a large beer hall where Hitler used to give speeches. It was real scary. They served beer

in glass mugs that were big enough to crawl into. I had never seen anything like them in any bar in America. For most people, a beer mug is something you drink beer out of. When you are in a band, you also have to consider them as potential projectiles.

I can remember sitting behind the cabinets writing a postcard to my friend Lydia Fly back in Washington, D.C. The message went something like this. "Dear Lydia: Hold on to this postcard, because it will probably be the last thing I ever write since my cranium will be smashed tonight by a three pound beer stein that one of these people are going to heave. Henry." But 1,300 people, and not one cheap shot.

We arrived in Vienna late the next afternoon. Our tour manager brought these two girls along with him for his trek with us. The girls were twins, one had black hair and the other had white. Supposedly, they were both virgins. Almost everybody in the crew tried to scam on them several times, but nothing ever came of it. They never talked to any of us, they just smiled and blushed a lot. More on those two later.

On to the show. The Minutemen, a confused but brilliant San Pedro, California-based trio, opened. Every night I would watch their set: it's a good way to gauge the crowd, pick out the assholes, and see how they move. A few songs into the set, D. Boon, the guitar player, gets hit with a trash can, a goddamn trash can! I thought this was going to be my last show. Tonight was the night that my head would get flattened by a trash can.

Just before we go on, a Pat Benatar song is played on the PA. The crowd didn't like that much; personally, Pat doesn't do a thing for me, but I don't think I'd get offended. So anyway, I walked onstage in these thermal-underwear pants, grabbed the microphone, and started lip-synching with good ol' Pat. Now, I thought this was great. However, the crowd got really mad.

I see this dude up front with a lit cigar. Every time I get close he takes a poke at me while the people on either side of him laugh. I make a note to watch him. However, I forget, because I'm playing hard. The third time, he jams the cigar into my leg. I slap it out of his hand. The big guy gets onstage and starts putting his arm around me. He's nice, but not my type. I look over at the bouncers, and they wave their hands and give me this "Oh no, I'm not going to get involved with this one" look. Fine. So I smile at him and gently



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THE WAY DOWN TO CATFISH
CANYON. JIMMIE BEACHED US
TO SEE THE 6-PACK

UNREAL
REETS

The Amazing Giant Petrified 6-Pack





Monica Dett

For some reason, Black Flag was headlining. I smelled trouble.

direct him to the edge of the stage so he can get off. He turns around and belts me in the mouth. Thanks OK, it's easy to tell at this point that this crowd is a little rough.

The set is far from over. I am at the front of the stage singing away and . . . YOW!! Some dude jabs me in the chest with a pen. A moment later the guy grabs the mike, screams, "Shit!" and bashes me in the mouth with it.

OK, now it gets really crazy. I look into the crowd. I see three white caps bobbing around. Cops. I keep staring at the white caps to watch what they do. All of a sudden, the caps start to jerk around and then disappear. The kids took the caps from the cops. We stop the music and watch. Kids suddenly were wearing the cops' clothes and were kicking the shit out of the cops. They killed a police dog. The doors of the hall open and the dog and three guys in their underwear go flying out into the snow. We finish the show and the crowd yells, "Fuck you!" We yell, "Fuck you, too," pack the equipment, and depart.

About those twins—I found out that Karl supposedly de-virginized them both, and a few weeks later they went to prison on charges of heroin trafficking. Now go play the theme from *Dragnet*.

Spring 1984, New Haven/New York/Boston

The schedule was to run like this: Friday, New York,

Saturday, New Haven, Sunday, a matinee in Boston. Fine. Sounds like a normal three days to me.

However, somewhere, somehow the Friday and Saturday shows had to flip-flop. That's fine, no problem.

So, we drive to the gig in New Haven on Friday afternoon and look for the load-in door at the club. Suddenly, we're not playing until tomorrow night. Todd Rundgren's *Utopia* is playing tonight. Oh no! Does that mean we screwed up and we are playing New York tonight? We call New York. Nope, the New York show also is tomorrow night. Nothing to do but hang out in New York all night or stick around and see ol' Todd. We had no place to stay in either place so we stuck for Todd Baby. Personally, I thought the dude sucked. And when the MC announced that "L.A.'s Black Flag will be here tomorrow night!" about 2,000 people gave me the distinct impression that they thought Black Flag sucked too. And . . . uh, well, anyway, yeah.

I forget where we slept, but we were in New York early the next morning and made our plans for two gigs in two states in one night. The Meat Puppets, who were on tour with us, would do their set, load their van, drive immediately to New Haven, unload,

Suddenly, from the corner of his eye, Henry Rollins spots the editors of *The New Yorker* charging the stage.



JOHN J. HEWITT

Kids were wearing the cops' clothes and were kicking the shit out of the cops. They killed a police dog.

and do their set. We would do the same.

So the Meat Puppets do their set. As the chords of their last song are still ringing, our road crew pulled the power from their guitars and did the fastest breakdown and load-out I have ever seen. It was pretty funny seeing them carrying stuff out, kicking the r through the crowd. The roadies figured that the audience were on y New Yorkers and were used to that treatment, so it was OK.

OK, so we did our set, and the crew did the kick-and-load scene again. It was past midnight, and we had a 90-minute drive, the load-in, and a full show still ahead.

We hauled ass to New Haven and unloaded while the crowd was watching. We were sweaty and gross from rushing to unload and set up. By the time the first song was over, I felt great. I felt like I could play all night. The people were so cool, sticking around waiting for us. Thanks, you guys.

Summer 1984, London

We were in England on our third European tour. We had a show at the Marquee Club in London. The club is a small, low-ceiling-type place. We soundchecked in the afternoon. Everything sounded real good. We were really looking forward to the show that night. I really like playing in London, because the crowd is uptight and they make me play hard.

Bill (then the drummer for Black Flag) and I were amped. We were walking around, looking at each other, and grinning. "Let's kill everyone," I OK. You know, that's real funny. I was thinking the same thing. You know, that kind of trip. Some nicks, when you're in London, you open your mouth to say something, but the only words that seem to come out are "destroy" and "kill everyone now."

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Finally, it's about an hour away from gig time. Bill and I are pacing around the dressing room. The DJ is playing this Imp punk rock/new wave music. We go into the DJ booth and make the guy play cuts from ZZ Top's *Eliminator* LP. The fucking DJ apologizes to the crowd before he plays ZZ. "Sorry, everyone. This is a request from Black Flag: ZZ Top!" The crowd starts to boo. That made me laugh so hard, I wanted to ram it right down their throats.

Bill and I are back in the dressing room, and this guy walks in. I stare at him because he looks so familiar. I keep staring. Could it be? Yes! It's Gene! Gene October! I say, "On, Gene—do you remember me? I'm that boy you kicked in the ribs; that short-haired hippie from L.A.!" He starts saying some shit like, "No mate, I don't remember kicking anyone! I think you guys are great!" He keeps blabbering away. Bill walks over and says, "Hey, Hank, is that the guy you said you were going to kill?" Old Gene really bums on that one. I say, "Yeah, man, that's him, all right!" Gene says, "Wait! I don't want to fight." I say, "That's really a drag, because I do, and I'm going to break your face right now." Bill says, "Kill him now, kill him now." Gene is really getting bent out of shape. I can hardly keep from busting up. I had no intention of touching him; he was drunk. "Well, Gene," I said, "Today you can go, but your toilet privileges have been denied. Now scat!" He left. It was cool.

We went out and played a good set. I passed out at Greg's feet during "Rat's Eyes" and some dude kicked me in the nuts and punched me in the mouth, and I didn't feel it.

Left. In the absence of corndogs, Black Flag guitarist Greg Ginn roasts one more set of ears. Right. "Hey, Hank, is that the guy you said you were going to kill?"



Peter Anderson

The doors of the hall open and the dog and three guys in their underwear go flying out.

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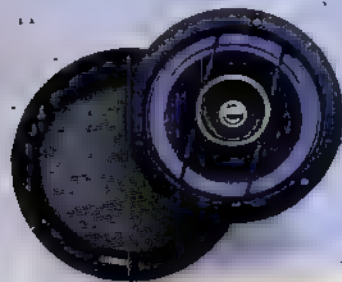
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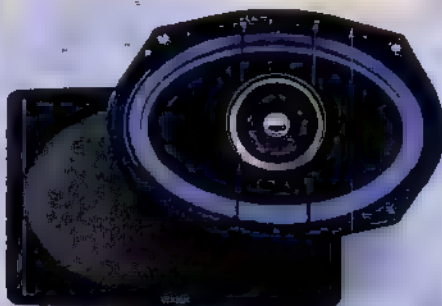


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KICKING ASS

After college, Terry Gilliam hung out at weird magazines, got into a riot, helped start Monty Python, and made *Brazil*. Then Hollywood tried to pull one on him. Terry didn't like that.

Article by
Jack Mathews

Sam Lowry, a mid-level bureaucrat, has found and courted his fantasy woman, Jill, a dazzling if slightly butch blonde who drives a truck and may be a terrorist. They've just spent themselves in a night of passion and are lying in bed naked. Suddenly, the bed is surrounded by masked government gunmen. They drag the screaming Sam from the bed and toss a body bag over him. A mask is zippered around his head. There is a burst of machine-gun fire "Jill! Jill!"

Late that night, Sam is strapped in a chair on a lonely platform in the middle of a gray, stadium-sized cone. An attendant pulls an iron grillwork mask over his face and advises him not to resist. In terror, Sam glances to his right, to the array of instruments laid out on a dentist's tray: a power drill, an ice pick, wire prods.

A man approaches Sam wearing a Halloween mask. It is Jack Lint, one of Sam's friends. Sam begs to be spared, but Jack selects an instrument from the tray, a section of needle-pointed wire, and thrusts it forward, toward Sam's eye...

When diabolically gifted Terry Gilliam dreamed up that torture sequence for his film *Brazil*, he meant it as a metaphor for the fate of individualists in a rigidly conformist society. Then last summer, he became Sam Lowry. When he was told by Sid Sheinberg, head of Universal Pictures, that *Brazil* was too bizarre for American audiences (Rambo-ed and Rocky-ed dolts that we be), Gilliam began talking about himself as if he were in the chair looking up at Sheinberg. Gilliam's Jill was *Brazil*, the fantasy that he had been in love with for 10 years, the movie he did not believe anyone would ever pay

him to make. The sex was getting it made, and the post-coital intruders were the studio's lawyers, armed with contracts showing that by making a movie that was six minutes too long, Gilliam had lost his freedom to make the picture his way. For this there was the torture chair Sheinberg would take two years of Gilliam's work and hack and cut it to broaden its commercial appeal.

But Terry Gilliam is no easily sacrificed lamb. He sent an anguished letter to Sheinberg: "Please let me know how much longer I must endure before the bleeding stops. Deterioratingly yours, Terry." When Sheinberg continued with his plans to release a shorter, happier version of the film, Gilliam started kicking ass. And when Terry Gilliam kicks ass, he kicks ass!

There are those who think Terry Gilliam is crazy. The one thing you know when you meet him — hair uncombed, face unshaven, feet bare — is that he's not trying to impress you.

His humor and his easy style draw you in immediately, and his openness — laced with the kind of comments that only someone unconcerned with his career would utter — instantly wins over interviewers. Gilliam may be spoiled to the teeth, but he holds to his simple principle — "You keep your word, I'll keep mine, and don't interfere with what I do."

It's mid-morning at the Chateau Marmont, the Gothic Sunset Strip anti-chic hotel for movie people who don't hang out at the Polo Lounge and don't care to be spotted. John Belushi was living here when he stopped living. Robert De Niro, a co-star of *Brazil*, stays here when he's in.

Gilliam steps on the balcony, from where you can see, to the right, Beverly Hills, reservoir of much of the film industry's ill-deserved profits, funneled there



in salaries and stock dividends; and in all other directions, the Hollywood studios.

"There are a lot of people out there getting fucked right now, it's scary," he says. "I don't know how anybody can live here and breathe."

He settles into an overstuffed chair and pulls his bare feet under him. It is late December. Gilliam, born in Minnesota, raised in Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley, and for 17 years a resident of England, is in town to help Universal promote *Brazil* and to bird-dog the studio's marketing people, whom he thinks are ignoring his movie to promote *Out of Africa*.

He's won his fight with Sheinberg, a campaign launched with a single line in a full-page ad in *Daily Variety* ("Dear Sid Sheinberg. When are you going to release my film *Brazil*? Terry Gilliam") and fought in clandestine screenings that won the movie best picture, best director, and best screenplay awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. The film opened to sold-out business in Los Angeles and has continued doing well as Universal grudgingly rolls it out into theaters across the country.

Gilliam's round face looks its 45 years but is filled with impish adolescent fervor. *Brazil* producer Milchan has been constantly urging him to lighten up, but he won't play the gracious winner.

"Arnon would always justify his friends in Hollywood," Gilliam says. "My attitude is that they're guilty until proven innocent. These people are assholes. I grew up out here, I know them. They are all assholes. I think Arnon now realizes I was closer to the truth than he was."

Gilliam in print is harsh, angry, and cynical. In person he is funny, sardonic, and occasionally naive. He punctuates his most devastating lines with an almost giddy staccato laugh. He is moving constantly while he speaks, feinting and jabbing at the air, as if he had his lethal knives and brushes in his hands and was skewering the opposition with the animation style that became the signature of Monty Python's Flying Circus.

The lone American member of Monty Python, the mostly unseen member who wrote bits and did all of its art and provided much of its acerbic bite, Gilliam co-directed Monty Python and the Holy Grail with fellow Python Terry Jones and later directed the opening segment (the pirate sequence)

of Jones's *The Meaning of Life*. On his own, he directed the strange medieval fantasy *Jabberwocky* and *Time Bandits*, arguably the most daring, commercially successful children's movie ever made.

"I don't know where my up-yours attitude comes from, I've never understood it," Gilliam says, chain-drinking coffee and pausing frequently to take calls. "I have never had the kind of ambition that people have to set goals and work for them. I have always just done what interested me." He briefly considered a career in the Presbyterian ministry but decided the church didn't have enough of a sense of humor for his tastes. "What kind of God can't take a few jokes?" he says.

After he graduated from Occidental College in Pasadena, Gilliam drifted to New York, where he landed an editing job on *Mad* magazine alumnus Harvey Kurtzman's *Help* magazine. Three years later, he moved back to Los Angeles and, in the only straight career job he ever held, did design and copywriting for an ad agency. His last client was Universal Pictures.

"It was horrible. Universal was doing really bad movies then. I did the ad line for *Madigan*, a Richard Widmark movie. It said, 'Once he was happy, now he is *Madigan*.' That's the sort of shit I was doing."

After being politicized in Los Angeles, where his long hair provoked constant harassment by cops and where a political rally he attended in 1966 ended up in a police riot, Gilliam left for London with his English girlfriend. There, he called John Cleese, whom he met while working on *Help*, and Cleese made some introductions that got him a job as an illustrator for a TV show called *Do Not Adjust Your Set*. The show's stable of writers and actors included Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin. Gilliam later became resident cartoonist for the BBC's *We Have Ways to Make You Laugh* and began doing film animation.

When Cleese took the BBC up on a standing offer to create his own show, he recruited his five funniest friends, Gilliam, Palin, Jones, Idle, and Graham Chapman, and after months of fussing with a format and a name, they settled on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. In August 1969, the show went on the air.

"The first show, people came expecting to see a circus," Gilliam says. "They had no idea what was going on up there. There was no laughter, just stunned silence. But we laughed a lot, so we figured it was OK."

"I promised myself a couple of things a long time ago. That I would never work strictly for money, and that I would not work on something where I had no control. I don't know many people running studios who don't think they're just as creative as you are. They have no respect for what you do as an artist. The art, in fact, is just some rubbish they have to deal with, the trouble end of their business."

Monty Python didn't temper Gilliam's anti-establishment attitude. The show was so popular in England and in its PBS incarnation in the United States that money became available for whatever movies they chose to make. *The Meaning of Life*, which was financed by Universal, was made without the studio even knowing what it was getting.

"They kept saying, 'We would like to see a script,' and we said, 'We aren't going to tell you anything about it.' Finally, we compromised a bit and said it was about fish, and they gave us the money. We couldn't have given a shit what they thought. Take it or leave it."

But Gilliam didn't have that kind of luck when he wrote *Time Bandits*, a quirky fantasy about a small English boy who travels through time and space to meet (and be disappointed by) his great heroes from history. The script was rejected by every studio in the U.S. and England, and even when it had been completed, Gilliam's backers had to put up \$5 million on prints of the film and advertising in order to get small Avco Embassy to release it in America.

"These people are assholes," says Gilliam of studio executives. "I know them. They are all assholes."

Then *Time Bandits* grossed nearly \$50 million, and soon Gilliam was being asked by studios to take a look at a few scripts they had lying around. The only script Gilliam wanted to work on was his own, *Brazil*, a retelling of George Orwell's 1984. Gilliam, envisioning a near future of bureaucratic rather than autocratic oppression, originally intended to title his film 1984-1/2, but the years slipped by. When Gilliam turned down an offer from 20th Century-Fox to direct *Enemy Mine*, regarded three years ago as one of the hottest properties in Hollywood, studio heads got interested in *Brazil*.

Co-written by British playwright Tom Stoppard and actor Charles McKeown, *Brazil* hangs its social and visual revelations from the thinnest thread of a plot. It's the story of Sam Lowry, a milquetoast bureaucrat (Jonathan Pryce), who sets out to correct the wrongful arrest of a man just like himself. Sam takes flight in nightly fantasies as a winged Zorro, trying to rescue a woman (Kim Cattrall) in a gossamer, windblown gown. When she appears in real life, in real danger, Sam sets out on a course that inevitably forces the system to squash him. The title is from the breezy Ary Barroso tune that typified the escapist music of the otherwise bleak '30s. Set in a high-tech world without the high, *Brazil* is a cumbersome, honeycombed society in which every conceivable convenience exists, but none works.

There are contraptions galore. Television screens jut out from metal stems and dangle in mid-air like wild sunflowers. Gangly ductwork worms its way obtrusively through every room, even in the finest restaurants, while TV pitchmen extol the beauty of decorator ducts. The computer terminals, by which the bureaucracy thrives and often fails, look like they were constructed from Western Union scrap.

There is, as even Gilliam admits, probably too much. For anyone trying to pay attention, it is like sitting in the backseat while Mario Andretti rushes you up Pike's Peak. No turn-offs. No stops along the way to catch your breath.

A few weeks after the film was released, the blood has dried but the wound still aches. Gilliam is standing on the balcony outside a Los Angeles ballroom where he will soon accept his award from the critics. At the pre-awards cocktail reception, Gilliam had caused a few heads to turn in the crowd when he approached Universal president Marvin Antonowsky. At the last moment they suddenly embraced. Out on the balcony now, Gilliam is still ungraceful, going on about the whole affair.

At the luncheon, Gilliam sits at the Universal table, between Antonowsky and another executive. Sid Sheinberg is not here, even though the studio's favorite, *Out of Africa*, is also picking up awards for Meryl Streep and cinematographer David Wadkin.

Then it's Gilliam's turn. He makes a speech, quoting the earlier reviews that *Brazil* had gotten from the studio's heads. "MCA chairman Lew Wasserman," Gilliam recalls, "said it was 'unreleasable.' Sid Sheinberg said it was 'relatively interminable.' [Universal president] Frank Price said 'Why bother with it?' I thank you for saving the film from the studio."

Then Gilliam returned to his seat — to one of the day's longest ovals — at the Universal table, where the applause was loudest of all.

He had kicked ass.



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KUCA University of Central Arkansas
KASR Arizona State University
KHSU Humboldt State University
KALX University of California
KCSF California State University
KSPS University of California
KUCI University of California
KULV University of La Verne
KLA University of California
KCLU Loyola Marymount University
KFAC Fullerton College
KSMC St. Mary's College
KCSN California State University
KUCB University of Redlands
KSCU University of Santa Clara
KCS San Diego State University
KSDT University of California
KCPB City College of San Francisco
KSPS San Francisco State University
KJIS San Jose State University
KCPB California State Polytechnic
KZSC University of California
KZSU Stanford University
KASF Adams State College
KABR University of Colorado
KWSB Western State College
WXCI Western Connecticut State University
WVOF Fairfield University
WVCT Carnegie Mellon University
WETC Trinity College
WESU Wesleyan University
WSCI Southern Connecticut State University
WCNI Connecticut College
WHUS University of Connecticut
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WVUM University of Miami
WFTT Florida Institute of Technology
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KUOH University of Hawaii
KBSU Boise State University
WIDS Southern Illinois University
WHPK University of Chicago

WKDI Northern Illinois University
WNUR Northwestern University
WAXM Lake Forest College
WRLS West Illinois University
WLRA Lewis University
WUIS Indiana University
WQCS Goshen College
WMND Rose Hulman Institute of Technology
KUNI University of Northern Iowa
KDCC Grinnell College
KBUJ University of Iowa
KJMK University of Kansas
KLSU Louisiana State University
WTUL Tulane University
WHPS University of Maine
WHMB University of Maine
WUPJ University of Maine
WVNY U.S. Naval Academy
WJMU Johns Hopkins University
WMUC University of Maryland
WCVT Towson State University
WAMH Amherst College
WMUA University of Massachusetts
WBM Bridgewater State College
WVNY Buffalo State College
WDM Framingham State College
WJUL University of Lowell
WMFO Tufts University
WMLN Curry College
WJFW North Dakota State College
WNEK Western New England College
WBBS Brandeis University
WCFM Williams College
WCBN University of Michigan
WMTU Michigan Tech University
WLFT Michigan State University
WCAI Calvin College
WIDE Western Michigan University
WVCK Northern Michigan University
WMHW Central Michigan University
WOUX Oakland University
WNMC Northwestern Michigan College
WMCN Macomber College
KRPR Rochester Community College
KQAL Winona State University
WMSU University of Southern Mississippi
KCOU University of Missouri
KWVC Stephens College

KCLC Lindenwood College
KWUR Washington University
KOLT Montana State University
KHMC Northern Montana College
KOCU Creighton University
KZUM University of Nebraska
KUNV University of Nevada
WUNH University of New Hampshire
WGLS Glassboro State College
WCPI Stevens Institute of Technology
WRRC Rider College
WMCK Monmouth College
WMSC Montclair State College
WESU Rutgers College
WLFE Stockton State College
WCOU Seton Hall College
WFDU Fairleigh Dickinson University
WKUJ Keon College
KHMS New Mexico State University
WCDE SUNY Albany
WOWN Cayuga Community College
WHEW SUNY Binghamton
WFUV Fordham University
WBCR Brooklyn College
WBNY Buffalo State College
WHCL Hamilton College
WSUC SUNY Cortland
WQMC Queens College
WQOS Hobart and William Smith
WCWP C.W. Post College
WHUJ Hofstra University
WCB Ithaca College
WFT Fashion Institute of Technology
WONY SUNY Oneonta
WNYT New York Institute of Technology
WPLT SUNY Plattsburgh
WTC Clarkson College
WVKB Vassar College
WVUE University of Rochester
WTR Rochester Institute of Technology
WBSU St. Bonaventure University
WRUC Union College
WRIA College of Staten Island
WJPS Syracuse University
WPNR Utica College
WRTV Elizabeth Seton College
WOU Ohio University
WBWC Baldwin Wallace College

WBSU Bowling Green State University
WVXU Xavier University
WRUW Case Western Reserve University
WCSB Cleveland State University
WOSU Ohio State University
WLSN Ohio Wesleyan University
WKSU Kent State University
WOCB Oberlin College
WYSO Antioch University
KCSC Central State University
KGOU University of Oklahoma
KBYR Oregon State University
KTTC Oregon Tech
KSLC Linfield College
KLC Lewis and Clark College
WLVE Lehigh University
WNCC Northampton Community College
WDRS Widener University
WBS East Stroudsburg University
WPSA Edenboro University
WZBT Gettysburg College
WKVR Juniata College
WUP Indiana University of Pennsylvania
WVPU University of Pennsylvania
WVBU Bucknell University
WNTS Westfield State College
WABC Allegany College
WUXY Millersville State College
WQMS University of Pennsylvania
WXPW University of Pennsylvania
WPTS University of Pittsburgh
WYRE University of Scranton
WXLV Lehigh County Community College
WQSU Susquehanna University
WBYC Shippensburg University
WPSU Pennsylvania State University
WVNU Villanova University
WCUW West Chester University
WVCK King's College
WNYC York College of Pennsylvania
WRIU University of Rhode Island
WBSU Brown University
WDOM Providence College
WVIN Rhode Island College
WJMF Bryant College
WSPF Clemson University
WUSC University of South Carolina
WBOE Elon College

WPLS Furman University
KAU Augustana College
WTTU Tennessee Tech
WUTK University of Tennessee
KUT University of Texas
KTXT Texas Tech University
KWBU Baylor University
WVUV University of Vermont
WJSC Johnson State College
WVUT Virginia Polytechnic Institute
WVVA University of Virginia
WCWM College of William and Mary
KLWS Western Washington University
KCAI Central Washington University
KZUM Washington State University
KCMU University of Washington
KUPS University of Puget Sound
WVBC Bethany College
WVUL Marshall University
WVWU West Virginia University
WBSD Burlington High School
WUCC University of Wisconsin
WLHA University of Wisconsin
WMS Milwaukee School of Engineering
WEST University of Wisconsin
WSSU University of Wisconsin
WAMU American University
KCEW Santa Monica College
CJSW University of Calgary
CJSR University of Alberta
CITR University of British Columbia
CFUV University of Victoria
CHSR University of New Brunswick
CHMA Mount Allison University
KEDU Dalhousie University
CFBU University of Guelph
CFMU McMaster University
CHWU University of Western Ontario
KCCU Carleton University
CKLM Ryerson Polytechnical Institute
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CRSO Concordia University
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Quincy Troupe



Patti and her son, Zuni

Diva

Article by Quincy Troupe

She is rambunctious, mysterious and magical, soft and shy and afraid. Patti LaBelle is the queen of rock 'n' soul, perched on the edge of the BIG success after the tumultuous end of "Lady Marmalade" and the spacequeens of rock.

There are at least three different people running around inside Patti LaBelle. At least three. Sometimes they merge and confuse the issue, blur the images we have of her. But most of the time they are sharply defined, separate from each other, as night is from day.

There is Priscilla, the onstage, rambunctious, glory-hallelujah-voiced diva of rock 'n' soul, strutting her hellfire-and-brimstone stuff, her white fake nails curved, clawing the electric air surrounding her performances like the hooked talons of some prehistoric, predatory bird, art-deco hair swept up and back like the fanned wings of a condor. Priscilla is out there, on the edge of dream and fantasy and mystery and magic, outrageous, scintillating, reckless. This is the Patti LaBelle that most of her public knows, and especially those who are holdovers from the days when she was the lead singer for the spacequeens of rock, LaBelle.

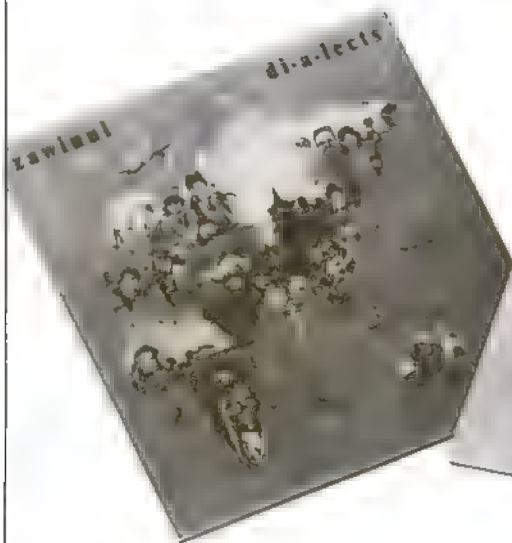
And then there is Patti LaBelle, the interpreter of ballads, who is inside the same body as Priscilla, up there onstage, who wears the same outrageous clothes and hairdos, but she is softer, gentler than Priscilla ever could be. She is the bridge between Priscilla and the other one, the one the public doesn't know.

This third woman is Patricia Louise Edwards, an admittedly shy, unassuming wife and devoted mother to a 12-year-old son, Zuni, and two adopted sons, Stanley and Stocker Dodd. This domestic side of the diva rarely goes to parties, has very few close "star" friends—her best friends are mostly those from high school days—shuns the fast lanes of the glittering Hollywood set, loves living in Philadelphia, does much of her own grocery shopping and housework—although she has a housekeeper—loves to cook for her family and close friends—and everyone says she can cook her ass off!—and polices her own bags at airports because of a phobia that redcaps might lose them. This woman's idea of a good time when she's home and not on the road entertaining? Playing cards with friends and eating plenty, plenty hard-shell crabs washed down with cold Heinekens. And this woman, unlike Priscilla and Patti, admits to being afraid.

Patti LaBelle is different, and in the past has been thought of by people who didn't know her as even being a little bit strange. But today one thing is certain about Patti LaBelle (at least it is true of her two onstage personas, Patti LaBelle or Priscilla, take your pick) and that is that she is a sizzling hot property in the entertainment industry, poised on the verge of superstardom. Not that she hasn't been famous or a star in the past, because she has, but on a different level; she was more of cult figure then, and to a smaller though devoted following.

This time around and with the release of her new album, *Winner*, on MCA Records (scheduled for late March or early April), Patti LaBelle's management brain trust, husband Armstead Edwards and Gallin Morey Associates, hopes to put her over the top. This time around they're going for the jugular vein of the worldwide market of faceless faces that live off digestible images of pabulum and *People* magazine—marketed entertainment, McDonald's hamburgers, designer jeans, soap operas, shopping malls, the characters of *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, the quips and banalities of Ronald Reagan, yuppies and buppies, and all those divergent, disruptive

WHEN THEY SPEAK,

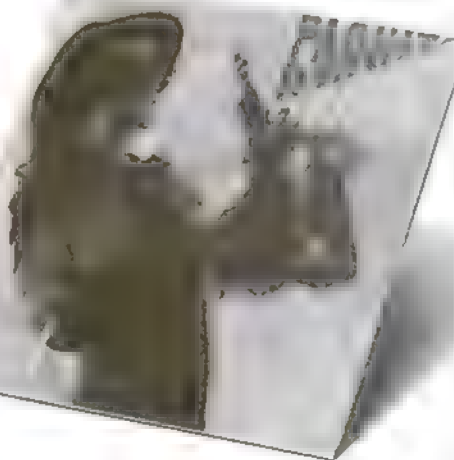


Zawinul "Dialects"

Great Sounds Spoken Here.

Nobody knows the language of the synthesizer better than Joe Zawinul. A founding member of Weather Report, Zawinul's new solo venture, "Dialects," expands on past statements and explores exciting new themes.

Music composed, performed and produced by Joe Zawinul.



Paquito D'Rivera "Explosion"

Music That Demands To Be Heard.

"One of the most original new voices in jazz today."
Boston Globe

Paquito D'Rivera is playing with fire on his latest album "Explosion." The Cuban-born saxman has planted his feet firmly in the American jazz mainstream with a highly-combustible mix of zest and finesse on both alto and soprano sax.

Produced by Helen Keane and Paquito D'Rivera with Ron Sant'German

YOU'D BETTER LISTEN.

On Columbia Records and Cassettes.

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and divisive elements that make up Madison Avenue's mass. This time around Patti LaBelle wants it all, and so stardom promises to be something different. It will be bigger and, quite possibly, more disquieting and disruptive for that other, shy, domestic lady, Patricia Louise Edwards, who admits to being afraid

Patti LaBelle arrives 35 minutes late at the downtown Philadelphia boutique for women that she co-owns with her husband. The store is called La Belle Ami and is located in a section of the city that was first historic, then was a slum, and now is moving towards the fashionable. In fact, some people now call the area "Society Hill." Like Patti LaBelle, it is "in" these days. Classy boutiques abound. Polished Mercedes Benzes and BMWs are parked there, and fashionable people are seen hurrying everywhere.

Patti apologizes for being late, saying she got caught in traffic. Her husband, a tall, lean, elegant, and handsome man with short hair and a beard, smiling, takes her wrap and helps her into a seat in the office in back of the boutique. She is smaller and calmer in person—more spiritual, in fact—than I had imagined her. She has beautiful, large, almond-colored eyes that look straight at you with an almost childlike innocence and directness. Even her hair is different from what I expected. It falls in cascades of long, twirling ringlets—reminding me somewhat of Diana Ross's hairstyle, only less of it—and frames an almost serene, angelic face. This is Patricia Edwards sitting across from me, demurely draped in a long gold lamé dress. Only her ever-present white fingernails give a clue that inside this woman are Patti LaBelle and Priscilla.

"I started singing when I was about seven years old," she says, tugging with her nails at the sleeve of her dress. "I just started singing for myself around the house. When I got older I started listening to Nina Simone, Dakota Staton, and Gloria Lynne. They were my favorite singers to listen to, but not to emulate or imitate. Other than listening to music I just stayed in my room, playing with my animals and looking into the mirror. That was it. I had no other friends but the animals and the mirror.

"I had three sisters and one brother," she continues, her hands now folded in her lap. "but I didn't play very much with them either. I was a homely child, a very homely child, at least I thought I was, and I didn't like playing with people. I just thought animals and mirrors were safer. And today I'm finding out that in most cases this is still true."

Her personality onstage began to emerge when she was about 15 after she joined a Philadelphia choir. People began to rave about her voice all around Philadelphia, where she was born on May 24, 1944. That makes her a Gemini, the sign of the twins, a split personality. But it was after she started singing around Philadelphia with local groups that she discovered the onstage personality of Priscilla.

"When I would perform," she recalls, smiling now at the recollection of her discovery, "I would be very outgoing, just real loose, and, you know, anything went. I was amazed at finding this other self, this real loose self, because I always had morals and knew not to do or say certain things. But there was a different personality up on that stage when I started singing, an altogether other somebody once I opened my mouth and sang.

"And that somebody wasn't afraid like my normal self was," she continues, her large eyes sparkling, growing even larger. "I have never been afraid to get up there onstage and sing, though I would be too shy to sing to just one person."

After singing around Philadelphia for a while, Patti joined a group called the Ordettes, which included Cindy Birdsong, who would later become a member of the Supremes. When two members of the Ordettes left, Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash were brought in to replace them. But their manager, Bernard Montague, changed the name of the group in 1961: Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles were born. Their first hit,



Leslie Fralker

the multimillion-selling "I Sold My Heart to the Junkman," was released in 1962. In short order, the Bluebelles released "Ali or Nothing," "You'll Never Walk Alone," "I Believe," "Danny Boy," and "Down the Aisle," which gained them a devoted following and a reputation as one of the foremost girl groups of the period. They toured extensively through America, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Europe. While in England, they met a young piano player named Reginald Dwight who played for them during their 1966 tour. Today he is known as Elton John.

By the early 1970s, LaBelle, the first all-female, all-black rock group, had forged a small but almost fanatical, near-cult following. This pre-crossover audience was a strange and bizarre mixture of divergent styles and people.

"I remember LaBelle doing a concert at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, October 6, 1974," recalls their former road manager, Ken Reynolds, "where we said we wanted everybody to wear silver. In my mind I envisioned people coming in a silver dress, or a silver bracelet, or a silver necklace. But I never expected to see a human being walking around the Metropolitan Opera House lobby with her body sprayed in silver and wearing a silver jock strap! I mean, silver bracelets and necklaces were in the minority," he continues, cracking up now at the memory. "I mean, there were people in silver capes, silver clown costumes, silver coats and suits, everything you could imagine. It was wild!"

It was in London that the transformation from Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles to LaBelle took place. The Bluebelles had gained their reputation by singing traditional, black R&B songs, spiced with reworked standards and ballads. Now, in the late '60s, after Birdsong left the group to join the Supremes, the remaining three decided to keep going, change the group's name and their singing style. Under the direction of their new English manager, Vicki Wickham (then producing the acclaimed British TV series, *Top of the Pops*), a new blueprint was thrown up to place LaBelle in the front ranks of rock music. Even their onstage dress was radically changed, from the traditional to the wild, outrageous, space queen look which made LaBelle trendsetters for the more theatrical costumes later adopted by all-male rock groups like Kiss. Their music now cut across generic lines. White audiences liked LaBelle because their music

was rock oriented. They toured with the Who and the Rolling Stones as opening act. Still, despite their dedicated hard-core white following, the group suffered from a lack of radio airplay. And so, in spite of critical acclaim, their first three albums, *LaBelle*, *Moon Shadow*, and *Pressure Cookin'*, were only modest financial successes. But with their first album for Epic in 1974, things began to change rapidly.

"I remember walking into the studio in New Orleans when they had just finished recording the *Nightbirds* album for Epic," says Ken Reynolds, "and everyone was so very excited. Almost jumping up and down with joy. And the song that they were so excited about was a cut called 'Lady Marmalade.' So they play it for me and I hear this 'gitchee-gitchee-ya ya ya' stuff and say, 'Why, that's the stupidest song that I have ever heard in my life. There's not one sentence in the song.'"

Sentence or no sentence, gibberish or not, the sin-

The night LaBelle broke up, Nona Hendryx locked herself in her dressing room and was beating her head against a wall.

gle "Lady Marmalade" was a smash hit and went platinum in America. Besides putting them at the top of the recording industry, the album made LaBelle the new darlings of jet-set circles. Two more popular albums followed *Nightbirds*—*Phoenix* and *Chameleon*. But after all of the years together, trouble lay ahead for LaBelle.

It is a cold day in December 1976. Patti LaBelle is sitting in the restaurant of a Baltimore hotel eating with members of her band and the rest of LaBelle's crew and staff. What's strange and different and ominous about this scene is the absence of Sarah Dash and Nona Hendryx. Up until now this had been a very tightly knit group, one that always ate together and played together. So their absence signaled that something was wrong.

The night before, in Cincinnati, there reportedly

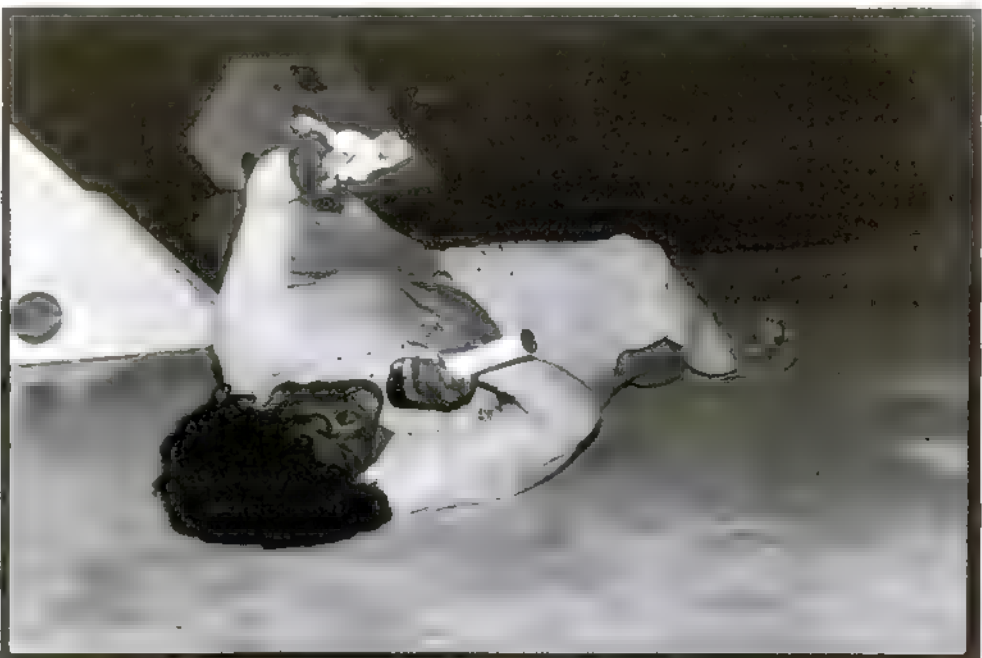
had been a serious disagreement between LaBelle, Hendryx, and Dash, three longtime friends who had been so close that once, while in Ottawa, Canada, they had all dressed in one dressing room, a though the promoter had provided each of them with her own. But they had always dressed together. This was the way they wanted it, this closeness at all times. They were like family. But now there were rumors among the crew that one of them had quit the group, because for the first time, on that cold December night in Baltimore, each of them had gone into her own dressing room and dressed alone for the show.

They went out and did the show, but two songs from the end, in the middle of their very dramatic song, "Hollywood," Nona Hendryx suddenly walked off the stage. Patti and Sarah finished the number, at which point one of LaBelle's staff jumped onto the stage and told the audience that the show was over. Patti protested, but the audience was a ready fang out.

Nona was found and brought to her dressing room, where she immediately locked herself in. She began destroying the dressing room and beating her head against a wall. Outside her locked door, pandemonium broke out. Everyone was hysterical. Patti and Sarah were screaming for help and crying. The crew had to break down the door to get to Nona, who was found bleeding profusely. She was taken to a hospital, having suffered a nervous breakdown. This was the last performance of LaBelle, a short distance from where it had all begun 15 years before in Philadelphia.

"It was us," says Patti LaBelle, growing pensive at the memory of the breakup. "We just couldn't do it together anymore, because we had different ideas musically. I wanted to do a lot of ballads, Nona wanted to remain in heavy rock, and Sarah wanted to do disco, or cabarets, or whatever. So we said before we'd fool the public and go out there and take their money and pretend that we were having fun, we'd end it. So we did, because we had to. We had reached our pinnacle as a creative group, and there was no other place to go but out on our own and individually do our own things."

"LaBelle had three very strong personalities up on stage and offstage, too," says Ken Reynolds. "Nona was the writer, and a brilliant writer, but she was a little difficult and could be very demanding. She wanted things exactly the way she wanted them and that was the way it was going to be, Sarah," he con-



Leslie Fralker

tinues, "was the body, the beautiful face that all the men came to see. But she could sing. But she also was very easygoing, too easygoing if you ask me. Patti was also easygoing, and there were times when I thought that she should have taken a stronger stand against Nona. She was the focal point of the group. Things that she knew were not right I think she should have spoken out stronger against."

When it was over, the breakup of LaBelle left Patti shattered.

"It was very painful," she says, "very, very painful. It was shrink time for me because it was like a marriage breaking up, and also I didn't know what I was going to do. I knew I had to sing, but I also knew that I had to sing by myself, which was very, very traumatic. I didn't think that I could go out there by myself, because I wouldn't have anybody to blame if anything went wrong. But I went on out, and the first time that I performed as a solo after the breakup, the people gave me a standing ovation. They accepted me. This was about a year and a half after the breakup, the summer of 1978, I think. But the year and a half before my solo debut had been hell. I went to a shrink for him to let me know that I was all right and that I shouldn't be afraid, that whatever I was feeling was natural, you know? And it was natural, and so I went out there and performed and saw that it was all right."

And it was. Her husband, Armstead, who up until now had been an assistant principal, gave up his career to manage her. (She has known him since childhood—19 years, 16 of them in marriage. According to Patti, he "loved my sister Barbara first. But since she dogged him, I thought I would give him a chance.") LaBelle's former piano player, James Budd Ellison, came on board as Patti's musical director. Two albums were recorded and released. One, *Released*, matched her again with Allen Toussaint, who had produced the landmark *Nightbirds* album for LaBelle. The single from that album, "Released," was critically acclaimed and sold well across the country.

In the beginning of the '80s, Patti made her acting debut in PBS-TV's production of Studs Terkel's *Working*. She also starred in two other PBS specials: tributes to Duke Ellington and Eubie Blake. But it was in Vinnette Carroll's play *Your Arms Too Short to Box With God* that Patti gained respect as a musical-theater artist. But her experience in the Broadway hit wasn't all pleasant. There were problems with her co-star, Al Green, the great singer.

"We didn't get along at all in that play," she says matter-of-factly. "We are good friends now, but during the play, I hated his guts and he hated mine. He just couldn't stand me and I could have killed him. We almost got into a fist fight because of the tension. My sister was dying of cancer, and I just couldn't take his ego thing. Throughout that production, I just wanted to break his face. But we are good friends now, and I love his voice and talent. We talk all the time on the phone now. Other than Al, I loved doing the play."

In 1984 she played the barmaid, Big Mary, in Norman Jewison's film adaptation of Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *A Soldier's Story*. She also was tested by Steven Spielberg for the role of Shug Avery in the film *The Color Purple*. She didn't get the part, a part she says she "would have been perfect for."

"I want to do movies," she says, "if the right ones come along. But if they don't, I'm not going to cry or die over it, because I'm very content doing what I'm doing."

And what she's doing now is going about the business of trying to expand her audience. In 1985, she took giant steps towards accomplishing this. First, there was her spectacular performance on the Motown Apollo TV special when, during the finale, she just blew everyone away, especially Diana Ross, who had handed her the mike. It was a dazzling display of vocal pyrotechnics that left everyone limp and in awe. This was followed by her Live Aid appearance before an estimated one billion television viewers, and once

"I wanted to break Al Green's face. I just couldn't take his ego."

again she was riveting, the showstopper. And finally there was her very own Thanksgiving TV special, *The Patti LaBelle Show*, that featured Bill Cosby, Cyndi Lauper, Luther Vandross, and Amy Grant.

"Since the special," she says, shifting her weight in her chair, "I've gone into households that I wouldn't have gone into if I hadn't done something like that. So I'm going to get that Tina Turner crowd and the Bruce Springsteen kids. I'm going to get the yuppies and the children, too. I'm going to get them all. I know it. Because they're just now finding out who Patti LaBelle is."

But what about all those people who will start bothering her once her face gets to be instantly recognizable—won't that make her uptight?



David Michael Kennedy

"No," she says right off the bat. "It's a problem when they don't recognize me. Gosh, I look for people. I hope that they come up and say they want an autograph. Yeah, it turns me on. It's not an intrusion. I mean, you become an entertainer to be intruded upon. That's why you become an entertainer, so people will recognize you. But a lot of people who get to this point," she adds, her voice rising now with excitement, "go to Hollywood and get real crazy and grand and say things like, 'Oh, my privacy is so important.'"

What one gets from this woman most of all is a love for her work. She says she will be singing until she drops and somebody carries her off the stage. Norma Harris, her hairdresser and longtime friend, says she worries about Patti because of the intensity of her performances.

"Patti can't wait to get out on that stage," says Harris, who created LaBelle's art-deco hairdo, which she calls "the fan," "because she loves to sing, loves to give her audience herself. Sometimes I think she gives too much. And sometimes, I hate to say this, I actually think that she's going to kill herself onstage. Because she gives all of herself out there. She takes it from the stomach, from her heart and it totally drains her. She cries a lot onstage. She sweats. She works herself to the point of exhaustion. So sometimes I get afraid for her. I've seen Patti do a great show and then listen to her saying she didn't think it was good and actually want to give the people their money back. She's too hard on herself, too hard."

But push on she does. Besides the TV appearances in 1985, she had two hit singles off the *Beverly Hills*

Cop sound track, "New Attitude" and "Stir It Up." She also has a live album in the can. And with such people on her new *Winner* album as Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson, Michael McDonald, and Peter Cetera of Chicago (with whom she sings duets), songs by Burt Bacharach and Carol Bayer Sager, and three songs produced by Pointer Sisters producer Richard Perry, Patti LaBelle is trying to parlay a great 1985 into a fabulous 1986.

But Patti has her detractors, some of whom don't like what they perceive as a grandstanding attitude. They think that LaBelle uses her great voice as a weapon to destroy when pitted against less gifted singers in situations like the Motown special and Live Aid, where people were supposed to be singing together, not competing with one another. And then there are those who think her crossover efforts will not bear fruit because they see her as diluting her special gifts. Some point to her TV special and what they say was a lukewarm response to a lukewarm show, one in which she toned down her act in an attempt to cross over. These people have adopted a wait-and-see attitude. And then there are still some who preferred her during her more avant-garde days with LaBelle and dismiss her music today as general family entertainment. These people say they would rather listen now to the old records of LaBelle, the group, rather than to Patti LaBelle, the solo act.

Whatever the final verdict, one has a feeling that Patti LaBelle will always be in there kicking and singing and stirring things up. For those who say she is a grandstander, she says, "God blessed me with a great, big voice. So when I sing with other singers I'm not trying to outsing them or anything. It just happens to work out that way sometimes, because I don't hold anything back when I'm singing. I don't try to offend anyone. But I'm a very impatient person," she goes on, "very, very impatient. I have to have it now, or forget it. I've always been this way, and that's why I give everything in my singing because I have to have it all and right now, and I have to give it all."

She says she doesn't listen to music around her house when she's there relaxing, not even to herself. What she does like to do is play cards and gamble. She once lost \$10,000 in a game of blackjack. She thinks Miles Davis, Cicely Tyson, and Wynton Marsalis have great personal style. She says that she is religious but doesn't go to church, hates vacations and beaches, and has great admiration for Coretta Scott King, the widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She says she loves to laugh, especially when someone who was acting stuck-up and cool trips and falls, or people snore loudly with their mouths open. She admits to having a strange sense of humor.

"One part of me wants to be out entertaining, and the other part of me wants to be home with my family, being a homebody, spoiling my son Zuni because I'm away from him so much. So when I'm home, I let him do whatever he wants to do until his dad gets home, and then he goes back to prison."

The two other sons, Stanley and Stocker Dodd, were adopted some years back when their mother, a neighbor and good friend of Patti and Armstead, suddenly died. In their early 20s now, they are as much a part of the family as Zuni.

Patti admits to still being a kid at heart, to having a lot of "little girl" in her. "Oh, I am," she responds, giggling, almost taking on the persona of a little girl, her eyes sparkling mischievously. "And I love to be babied. But my husband doesn't do it enough. He's really straight. I knew he was like this when I married him. I mean, I knew the job was dangerous before I took it."

"He doesn't baby me nearly enough," she says again, looking over at him mischievously. He just smiles. "He doesn't hear me crying, at least he pretends he doesn't. I think he knows the movie already, and I think he knows that I'm trying to exploit him. So he's just stern. He just doesn't give me what I want all the time, which is probably good, in the long run, because everybody else does."

JACKSON BROWNE LIVES IN THE BALANCE

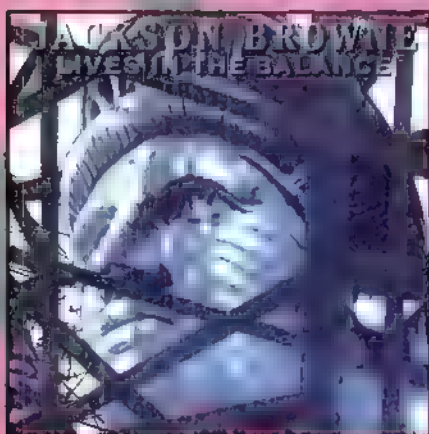
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nce upon a time, radio came in one version—amplitude modulated, commonly known as “AM”—and the FCC, which is in charge of broadcasting in the United States, said it was good. So every family bought a radio and sat around and listened and the FCC didn’t have to say it was good because everybody was living happily ever after and there was no reason to believe anything would ever change. Then came television to deal AM radio a two-fisted whammy. It had pictures and it had a secret weapon. Hidden between channels 6 and 7 was a brand new kind of radio. It didn’t fade under bridges or burst into static. In his holy search to give every object an acronym, man called this new frequency-modulated radio FM.

Those early days of FM were times for visionaries and pioneers. While AM stations changed hands for millions of dollars, the FCC was giving away FM allotments. The people who owned deeds to the first FM stations could afford to be open-minded: anything broadcast was sure to rate higher than nothing at all. Early FM was a province for bold idealists who programmed music from the edge of their chairs and the seat of their pants. They screwed up plenty and played things nobody wanted to hear. When they did, the listeners turned off the radio, but they always returned eventually. Cuts ruled the turntables. If a disc jockey liked something, he played it. While AM broadcasters were letting jukebox tapes dictate their programming, FM was human, responsive, and bold. FM was free-form, with splashes of genius and blithering drivel and lots and lots of neither-netherland between. Truth be known, free-form radio very seldom works. In the end, only college stations could afford to keep doing it, which is where this story begins.

Long ago, during a fling with New Deal socialism, Congress, which controls the FCC, decreed that the lowest 20 frequencies on the then-new broadcast dial were to be allotted to stations without commercials. And so it was done.

At first those stations were gawky, awkward culture klatches where one could hear a symphony or a squeaky-voiced young coed stumbling through the ever-popular Department of Agriculture report. For thrills, they’d thread up Professor Blabithudark’s exciting Economics 101 lectures at 5 or 6 in the morning for all the bedridden extension students. There are still such culture-cultist stations today, though most are aligned with professional program syndicators, such as NPR, and run by adults with paid staffs.

However, today’s bold idealists are making waves on college rock stations—the only place where new music is played on a regular basis. If you want to hear who’s hot, you have to listen to college radio. But an illness is affecting those stations. It threatens to eliminate the new, different, and inventive. Noncommercial radio is following the path that led commercial radio into the era of by-the-numbers rock ‘n’ roll.

College Radio

College radio may be fun ‘n’ games, but it’s the last outpost for progressive music.

Article by Andrea ‘Enthal

In broadcasting, you can't see the audience response. It's always midnight inside a radio station, no windows, just meters, clocks, and dials. From inside the control room of a radio station you can't tell if 100 or 100,000 people are listening. You can't see when people turn off or turn on the radio. That void is scary and deadly, and it's always there in response to the void, commercial radio learned how to do audience research. The music trap was set.

It all happened so sneakily on the commercial band. Those first programmers understood the bottom line. They knew they had to make radio that would attract the largest possible audience. So they turned to research. What music did people like? The researchers measured record sales, and free radio died.

The megabucks didn't destroy commercial FM radio out of an evil drive to hammer Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" into everybody's brain. They were driven by desperation. Success breeds need, which breeds ambition, which in turn needs more success. AOR is the science of music programming. The programmers have trade papers and conventions and awards. Personal taste is minimized. Statistics are its truth.

When Congress created the noncommercial band, it was trying to do more than give teenagers a place to cycle their fave raves 24 hours a day. The creation of college radio was an act of 180-proof distilled idealism. Here was going to be a haven for art, unfettered by any commercial realities. But the void is just as dark on the noncom side of the transmitter. Kids also want to succeed.

KCPR, California State Polytechnical University's radio station, has a handbook that explains the battle between AOR and the free-form thinking that existed previously: "Many people think that KCPR should sit at (or even beyond) the 'cutting edge' of modern social and musical trends, and that it cannot properly claim to be 'alternative radio' unless it does so. However . . . we simply cannot expect the largely conservative audience . . . to pay much attention to us . . . if we position ourselves too far away from their points of reference. . . . Just before the top of the hour you play a Red Current. At the top of the hour you should play an upbeat familiar cut. . . . You play another Red Current before .15, and follow that with a Clean Cut. . . . Only at the :30 are you expected to choose two songs in a row. . . ."

What's being described is called a rotation wheel. It was invented for jukebox radio, an era in Top-40 AM broadcasting. Tabulations from jukeboxes were used during the 1940s and '50s to determine song popularity for airplay.

The alleged statistical truths of commercial radio are revealed in trade magazines such as *Billboard* and *Radio & Records*, a weekly tabloid that consists primarily of charts. For example, R&R recently had charts for Whitney Houston's "How Will I Know?" listing the 162 stations that played it and showing what else those stations played (though there's no need to read more than one or two charts. They're like decks of cards—all the same except for the order). The information is compiled into larger charts so you can read that Houston is ranked 31st among stations identifying themselves as contemporary hit radio (CHR) and 15th among adult contemporary (AC) stations, if you can imagine any reason why you'd want to know that.

College radio has its own junior AOR reports, *Rockpool* and *CMJ* (*College Media Journal*). They also have station track list pages and compilation charts. Just like R&R, the playlists read like shuffled decks. What good does reading Top 10 track lists

do for noncommercial broadcasters? Damned if I know.

"I think there are definitely Top 40 records and AOR records and college-station records. All the college stations' playlists look the same," admits Harry Levy, program coordinator of the University of San Francisco's KUSF. "AOR radio plays Rush and Loverboy and Asia. College radio plays R.E.M. and Hüsker Dü and the Smiths." Chris Werner of the University of Iowa's KRLI explains in an attempt to outline a real difference between the two. "College radio is an alternative to Top 40 and AOR and hype."

But that difference is like the differences between CHR, AC, AOR, and the rest of the commercial-

**Today's bold idealists
are making waves
on college rock stations—
the only place where
new music is played
on a regular basis.**

radio acronym soup. Each plays somewhat different artists for the same reasons. An artist who does well in one format will often show up on the others later. Tears for Fears, the Smiths, and Simple Minds recently topped the college charts when they released new albums. Subsequently, on *Radio & Records'* CHR chart, Simple Minds made it to No. 2. Hüsker Dü is the current darling of the college set. If Warner Brothers, who recently signed the band on the basis of its college-chart success, has its way, Hüsker Dü will be a commercial hit within the next 18 months. It's unlikely that college radio will drop the Hüskers even if they become as well-known as the Beatles or the Stones. That's part of the problem with junior AOR. Like regular AOR,

which started out as an alternative to something specific, junior AOR has no criteria for when to drop one artist and move on to the next.

Once upon a time, not really so long ago, there were AM artists and FM artists. The FM stations played the new and breaking acts—FM was an alternative to AM. Today, they're both playing Bruce Springsteen and Tears for Fears. Twenty years ago, playing the Doors, the Rolling Stones, and the Velvet Underground was a bold, antieestablishment act. But those same stations are still lighting the same fire in 1986. Times have changed, but the stations haven't. If "alternative radio" is specifically an alternative to AOR, then who's going to be an alternative to alternative radio next year, and the year after that? Cable? Will there even be alternative radio by 1990? Will *Radio & Records* next have a chart called alternative, or ALT? Noncommercial radio has both feet inside that music trap.

For example, KUSF's playlist is heavily statistical, citing exactly the number of plays that placed each record in its 1–30 ranking, adding a separate (and totally indecipherable) "retail action" decimal figure. Levy said such statistics made KUSF influential and respected by record companies.

College radio, puppy-willing to please the pros, has become commercial radio's farm league. Nobody I spoke to could explain how the college stations could benefit by breaking acts for commercial radio. Record companies would have college radio believe that that's their reason for existence. Forget the 30 pieces of silver. A few hundred free records, T-shirts, and concert tickets are the price of air time on the noncommercial band. Neither commercial nor noncommercial stations own the frequencies they broadcast on; you and I do. They exist to serve our interest. In whose interest is junior AOR?

There can be an art to radio, and a flow and a feeling. There's a magic moment when one record melts into the opening of another, and there's a pulse to good programming that no record alone can evoke. Good radio can take you on a roller coaster of textures, emotions, memories, and lyrics. How and when did we forget about that?

"College radio is supposed to make people a little bit uncomfortable," says Scott Boxenbaum, assistant music director of WBR5 at Brandeis University. "At its best it's sort of an idealism. Idealists always



Robyn Hitchcock (left), perennial cult hero, spins platters with DJ Jon Fox at WNYU, the 4,200-watt station at New York University

have to push new things. Sometimes it'll work and sometimes it doesn't. It's the attempt that counts."

SPIN magazine and SPIN radio would like to cite the individuals and stations that we feel are making attempts that count. The following are the winners of the first annual SPIN radio awards

INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE

"I grew up in La Grande, Oregon. It's a tiny town in the hills. You know: four wheel-drive country, with gun racks in the back and deer antlers on the hood. We didn't have punks," says Lucy Lizzard (who pronounces her name liz-ZARD, rather than like the animal). Lizzard produces and hosts *Modern Mono*, a program on KRVM in Eugene, Oregon. A high-energy blast of current underground music, *Mono* presents everything from Elvis Costello through the psychesixties-gone-eighties grunge of Australia's Scientists, with a heaping helping of foreign and American punk.

"I never wanted to be a cowboy," Lizzard continues. "I hung out with the hippies in high school. In La Grande the hippies were the rebels. It's the kind of place where you can still get beat up for having long hair." Punk music appeals to her, she says, because it shares an "attitude of rebellion."

Lizzard's interest in a music not available at her corner chain record store may be what makes her an exceptional noncommercial radio programmer. No apathy. Every record she airs is there because she chose both the artist and the cut. By reading magazines and fanzines and following word of mouth, Lizzard finds good records that couldn't have found her, rather than producing a program out of what's mailed to the station. Lucy Lizzard is giving listeners a chance to hear music they wouldn't otherwise have access to. That's what alternative radio can do at its best.

EXCELLENCE IN MUSIC SELECTION

Diamanda Galas is the exorcist of the opera. She screams shivering peals of operatic scale that are processed through digital delay units much like those used by Laurie Anderson. How she ended up on the same radio program as the mod-pop Jam and dance-oriented Front 242 is one of the wonders of free-form rock broadcasting. It happens on WCN in Worcester, Massachusetts. Seven hours a night, 49 hours a week, WCN plays alternative rock—anything from Eugene Chadbourne's amplified garden rake to local '60s softies Salem 66. There's no formula or format. WCN has learned how to foster good taste and a basic knowledge of new music in its community-volunteer staff. The DJs are selected through demo-tape auditions. Those who show promise on tape are trained for the air. No previous experience is necessary, only potential is required. As with original free-form radio, sometimes it works, and sometimes it bombs. You take your chances every night. Offering listeners a rare opportunity to learn about today's non-mainstream music and have a good time too, WCN is truly using its noncommercial status in the public interest, and with 8,000 watts in densely populated New England, it can serve a lot of public.

EXCELLENCE IN A COLLEGE COMMERCIAL STATION

From reading its Top 10 reports in college trade papers, you'd never guess Princeton's WPRB is a special station. Those reports show it playing the same R.E.M., Cure, Dire Straits, and Husker Du albums that every junior AOR outlet has embraced. But while the junior AORs play R.E.M., the Cure and Husker Du again the following hour, WPRB unleashes its secret weapons, such as acid-damaged psychedelicatesen chef Roky Erickson, minimalist folk rockers Young Marble Giants, and 100 Flowers

DAY BY DAY IT'S HAPPENING... HOOTERS ARE SPREADING ACROSS AMERICA!



When WPRB is good, it is very good, coupling records by concept and sound. It takes a finely demented mind to realize that Pink Floyd's "Breathe" and Salem 66's "Across the Sea" share a textural similarity that will make them melt into each other when they're cross-faded, and it takes somebody with more than just a knowledge of how to cue hits to play Marc Riley and the Fall next to each other (Riley started his career with that band). But it's the quality of the station's worst DJs that earns WPRB our commendation: they never descend to a level that makes you give up all hope for the next three hours, because even at their worst, they always play something interesting. WPRB isn't afraid to let its student broadcasters be awkward or experiment. "Please note," wrote Vickie G. Gonzales in a cover letter explaining the station's format and philosophy, "that professional does not mean slick." WPRB's DJs aren't into time, temperature, and name-of-the-last-track announcements, nor are they so tightly formatted that you can't hear their personal taste. WPRB has managed to keep its balance in the battle between free form and format, so that its less-inspired DJs have support and guidance, and its good DJs are free to shine. That's no easy feat.

EXCELLENCE IN SUPPORTING A LOCAL MUSIC SCENE

Lawrence, Kansas, is a college town—home for the 24,000 students at the University of Kansas. KJHK, the student-operated radio station at the university, is one of those rare stations that is the focal point of the local music scene. Prior to 1985, the scene was very underground or very distant, with most popular underground/college-circuit bands only playing in Wichita, or Lincoln, Nebraska—the former almost two hours away by car, the latter a four-hour drive.

During the summer of 1985, Jeff Hekmati, one



Barry Scheid

**A few hundred free records,
T-shirts, and concert
tickets are the price of air time
on the noncommercial
band.**

of the 56 student DJs at KJHK, organized Sound Alternative Productions, an independent promotional organization that uses the station's resources to help book popular underground bands into local clubs and the university. Then Hekmati and John Chaney, another KJHK staffer, helped to organize the Outhouse, an underground music club in an old cinder-block farm shed in a cornfield four miles east of Lawrence. John convinced Don Melienbruch, the owner, to donate the building, and KJHK staff members helped build the stage. Since August 1985, KJHK has presented shows at the Outhouse featuring groups ranging from national college favorites such as the Meat Puppets, Screamin' Sirens, and Rank and File to local groups such as the Micronotz and Near Death Experience. All profits from the venture are donated to the radio station.

The station also publishes *New Music Report*, a biweekly magazine that provides information about upcoming shows at local clubs and station programming, and album and concert reviews.

KJHK, in association with Fresh Sounds Records, a Lawrence-based label, is currently producing a compilation album featuring local groups. The project was coordinated by Mark Lipsitz, station manager and former music director. The album, scheduled for release in March, is titled *Red Line and KJHK Present Fresh Sounds From Mid-America, Part 3*. The station is raising money to complete the project by presenting concerts featuring bands scheduled to appear on the record.

The staff members of KJHK are commended for being an instrumental force in developing and promoting a local alternative music scene and making the station an integral part of the local music community. It takes vision and courage to play progressive alternative music on a radio station, but only hard work and dedication will create and maintain a progressive music scene.



THE HEAT IS ON



ocean pacific

WHEN YOU'RE A SINGLE PARENT, YOU TEND TO BE A LITTLE OVER PROTECTIVE.

Well, Colonel John Matrix certainly gets our vote for "father of the year." After all, he punches a pipe in a man's stomach. Rips a man's throat out. Breaks necks. And kills hundreds of bad guys to get his daughter back. Now that's a father. See Arnold Schwarzenegger in **COMMANDO**. But don't try to take his daughter. Available on home video cassette.



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moving images

This month, Cisco and Egbert review children's toys, *Toilets of the Gods*, and the *Return of the Continuation of the Imitation of the Miami Vice* look. And some videos.

EGBERT & CISCO AT THE VIDEOS

EGBERT: Hi, I'm Roger Egbert, rock video critic of the Middletown Star-Ledger.
CISCO: And I'm Gene Cisco, rock video critic of the Middletown Daily Mirror.

EGBERT: This month At the Videos we'll be looking at videos by the Scorpions, Hoodoo Gurus, Stevie Wonder, Pete Townshend, and Roger Daltrey.

CISCO: But first we have a weird one called "Silent Running" by a group called Mike and the Mechanics.

EGBERT: This starts off like a typical Steven Spielberg kids' movie. A mysterious stranger gives a kid a mysterious key. It's the kid's birthday. We can tell because he has on a stupid party hat. There's a night sky that makes you believe that anything is possible. Uh-oh, now the stars are freaking out. The kid is going into warp drive. Oops, now he's out there in space.

CISCO: It's 10 o'clock. I'll bet his parents don't know where he is. He's on Mars. Where a rock band turns up on his TV monitor.

EGBERT: No, that wasn't really happening. The kid is now back in his room, and we see that his recent travels were in fact hallucinations brought on by staring at his very weird toys.

CISCO: Oh! The parents are fighting in the kitchen again.

EGBERT: Yeah, they'll do it every time, putting the kid uptight. And now, predictably, the kid's dolls are starting to wink at him.

CISCO: This boy has dolls?

EGBERT: He's an equal opportunity kid.

CISCO: He also has a photo of the pervert who handed him the key when he was outside hyperventilating.

EGBERT: Now the pervert is standing outside of the house in a trench coat. Actually, I have no idea what's going on in this video. But I would say that Mike and the Mechanics have a Wall Street version of the ZZ Top look. They have neatly trimmed beards and Burberry raincoats. Now the kid has taken the key again and he's going upstairs in his jammies.

CISCO: It must be the key to the bathroom. It's a really exclusive house.

EGBERT: The wall-to-wall carpeting is very nice. Oooh, now there's an unearthly light coming from the bathroom. It's shining right under the door. They must use a ton of Ajax to keep a bathroom that bright and sparkling.

CISCO: Well, he's unlocking the door, so we'll know soon enough how they got that bathroom so bright. There it is. It's one of those lozenges they put in the toilet bowl.

EGBERT: No, it's an alien. It's a god, some kind of plumbing deity. You don't really think that gowing thing is a toilet bowl cleaner?



John Fulk

This is the new Pete Townshend. Maybe he thought Roger Daltrey looked silly, and he's trying for a more mature thing with a big band.

CISCO: Yeah, Mr. Tidy Bowl.

EGBERT: No, it's shimmering heavily. In fact, it's a hologram of a rock star that has materialized in the toilet.

CISCO: It's Rock Star in a Can!

EGBERT: The hologram is singing "Can you hear me?" as he turns into a cube. Perhaps a sugar cube laced with LSD-25. A lot of the camera angles and production qualities of this video remind me of ads for Levolor blinds. Wait a second. I think the pieces of this puzzle are coming together. The guy we mistook for a per-

vert is actually the boy's father, who left some time ago to go to space because of domestic arguments, and now he's sending this toilet bowl hologram message: "I need your help."

CISCO: What if that happened to you? What if some guy materialized in a toilet bowl, turned into a sugar cube, and told you he needed your help?

EGBERT: I'd flush him. Ooh, look at this! The mother finds the kid in the bathroom and she thinks he's in there jacking off in this blazing light. Oh wow! The kid has broken through to another dimension.

CISCO: The mom is calling after him, but she's too late.

EGBERT: It's all her fault. Those toys drove him insane. Why didn't she buy him something normal, like Masters of the Universe? Or an Andre the Giant doll?

CISCO: Wow, what's this? EGBERT: This is one of the MTV artists series. This one is Jean Michel Basquiat in his studio. He and Arto Lindsay did the music for this.

CISCO: This is great. EGBERT: Yeah, if you're a painter you can have good music on MTV.

CISCO: Next we have the Scorpions doing "Big City Nights."

EGBERT: Finally we're going to see what

"Big City Nights": Everything you could predict about the Scorpions' lifestyle, interspersed with shots of kids pumping their fists in the air. (L-R) Francis Buchholz, Rudolf Schenker, Klaus Meine, Matthias Jabs, drummer Herman Rarebell.

their lifestyle is really like. A real babe in leathers sitting on a pool table. A host of frenzied nubes at the arena. High fashion T-shirts, wild lights, girls wearing death's heads and leather miniskirts running across the stage. Girls with straps where you've never seen them before. Girls that look like Charlotte Rampling in incredibly expensive Japanese plastic clothes. Snowball fights. Hotel suites. Arenas filled with screaming people. Girls breaking into your limo to kiss you. Gibson flying-V guitars. Girls screaming "You're number one" at you. CISCO: Smoke machines. Being split into multiple video images. Ten thousand dollars worth of lighting gels. Weird people in the dressing room. Champagne flowing. More limos. More bimbos. CISCO: Hotels with revolving restaurants on the roof. Footwork. Shaking your hair

continued on p. 117

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"HONKY TONK MAN"



JOHN LEE HOOKER continued from p. 57

to make some sorrowful sense. Because with most all of the white blues guys, if they were really and truly willing to go all the way, why, somewhere back deep in their dad's own suburban closet is a polyester suit, still hanging there nice and fresh and preserved—this stuff lasts forever, with no biodegradation taking the snappy crease out of your cuff—that's practically the spittin' image, the precise spiritual twin of, say, Muddy Waters's own stage and street wardrobe. But what white blues guy wants to dress like his dad? Hey, the whole reason that white guys get into the blues is for the sake of the rebellion that the blues represents. Or at least the tradition-smashing rebellion it represents to white guys, who do their best not to see their heroes' polyester suits and pimp socks and F-15 shirt collars as an expression of a desperate need to be accepted, who do their best not to see any of that at all.

On the television in the room high above the beach at Santa Monica, one of the Dodgers has just hit a home run with one man on, and John Lee Hooker is in an expansive mood. He's laid down a few choruses of the Standard Rap, and in the absence of questions a med at clearing up his muddled idiosyncrasy once and for all, he gets going on a subject that's very near and dear to his heart—money.

"I makes pretty good money and I keeps my over-head down. And I'm always tryin' to come along with my earnings. Year after year, I been buildin' it, my income. I ain't aimin' to blow it with women, whiskey, cocaine. I own four houses. I own two in Oakland—one, two, three in Oakland—and the house I'm livin' in in Redwood City. I budgets myself. I got myself a real nice home and two real nice cars. I got myself a 380 SL Mercedes, a '82, and I got a Seville, a '81 Seville." He's proud of himself, and even prouder when he says, "I ain't had a day job since I got a hit with 'Boogie Chillen'."

It's sad to hear Hooker's rendition of the way his life is lived these days, and if word of it ever gets out there'll almost certainly be a radical reappraisal and an inevitable downgrading of his aesthetic importance among the more tough-minded of the blues journals. First of all, he failed to die a mysterious or painful or illicit or degrading death at a young age, and thus leave his promise sadly unfulfilled. It was a major mistake, historically speaking, and he's compounded that error by the utterly unromantic bourgeois banality of his unbecoming, prosperous survival. The legend-making process that brings the blues to vicarious life for its white audience has been short-circuited entirely by Hooker's hard-headed refusal to cooperate. The best he can do is describe his social life off the road, which starts off as something of an improvement but rapidly turns repulsively upscale.

"I go into these little bars, the down-home bars—I don't need to spend a lot of dough, show off, go to these places where a bottle of beer costs you a couple of dollars. That's just the way I am." He hesitates. "When I go to some of these places, you know what I do? Maybe this sounds silly to you, but I get some guy, you know, give him ten or fifteen bucks when I'm driving my Mercedes, and I says, 'Watch my car, keep an eye on my car till I get ready to go.' Oh, I got a burglar alarm on it, but some of these places, a burglar 'I am don't mean nothin'. I'd rather be out \$15 than be out a whole car—oh, I can get it back, the insurance gonna have to fix it, but I gotta pay the first \$500—I got a high reduction. With everything on that car, I paid \$46,000 for it just like it was. Then I had the telephone put in there—that was five thousand. That \$51,000 right there. Then I took off the wheels that come with it and got those steel wire wheels? Put those wires on it—might as well go all the way, you know?"

It's almost too depressing to go on. Cadillacs, Mercedes, wire wheels, mobile phones—surely Blind Lemon Jefferson and Charlie Patton would never

or would they? It's enough to cause a blues fan to go find some other kind of music to patronize. But Hooker's too busy to consider the dreadful blow it might provide to his authenticity if word should leak out. "It's kind of expensive to use. I don't use it all the time, just once in a while, like when I want to kind of show off—see some ladies, you know." He laughs. "Sometimes you can fake with it. You drivin' along, 'tend you talkin' on it while some pretty lady's drivin' along by. You pass somewhere where a lot of ladies is at, ride all along in that area. They see the phone, they see your mouth—you talkin' your mouth. They don't know whether you talkin' or not." He laughs. "They say [falsetto], 'Ooooooh, looka that! Looka that!'" He's slapping his knees now. "Yes sir! Yeah, it's a lotta ways you can do that, you know. Yeah, it's a lotta ways you can do that."

There's another story that John Lee Hooker tells, strung loosely through the song he sings. It drifts, it rambles, it stumbles and stutters and shouts, it walks a bad, bad walk—it talks that talk. A boy comes up from the country. Drifting. He goes from corner to corner, bar to bar, town to town, woman to woman. Drifting and drifting, like a ship out on the sea. Words fall out of him—strong words—and he piles them up into songs that are stories, and stories that are songs. Some of those words and some of those songs come from someone else, someone who came along before him, but they belong to him now, because he makes them his own. He doesn't sound much like anyone else, and that's not necessarily the way a young and hungry man would want it, but that's the way it is. The songs he sings are his, but they belong to anyone who flips a coin at him too.

Sometimes he feels so good, so fine. The style he's got, ain't nobody else in the world has got it, and can't nobody take it away. It's his because it comes from him, and because he knows who he is. His songs piss and moan, slam the door, kiss your ass goodbye. They wheedle and needle, they feel sorry for themselves, they laugh right in your face. They hold you 'neath the black water till the little bubbles stop coming up. They rave and plead and beg forgiveness, they set back and watch. He knows who he is.

There ain't no coffeehouses anymore," Hooker says, but the place he'll play this evening is about as much of one as you're going to be able to find these days. It serves fruit juice. The audience is mostly white and mostly reverent. Mostly. He comes out adorably, a small man getting smaller with age—and stiffer in the joints—wearing his white fedora and his sharp red suit. He's making a solo appearance tonight, but his guitar is plugged into an amp and the air fills with ragged, jagged riffs, rough, raw, lumpy, coagulated clots of rhythm. He does a few of his hits and a few other things, and the audience feels called upon to demand the boogie, to offer John Lee Hooker yet another piece of artistic advice.

"I'm na dedicate myself a number," he says ever so slowly, his voice so rich it must make God jealous. "And I hope you like it." It doesn't sound like he much cares one way or the other. "It's called 'I Cover the Waterfront.' It's a easygoin' ballad, easy on the ears Slow." He pauses. "But true." He's thumping the strings of his guitar as slowly as he talks. "Take a listen."

The song is full of space, empty space, and his voice. It's blank, unrhymed imagery, as so many of his most personal songs are, and no song has ever been lonelier. He's walking the waterfront, watching for the ship that brings her back. Watching. He sees other people meeting their loved ones, hugging and kissing, but he doesn't see the one he's waiting for. "And the ships / Headed out / For their next destination / I still sit there / Coverin' the waterfront." And then the guitar speaks—and as it does, a drunk white kid up front gives out with a good-time party holler, too antsy to wait for the boogie any longer.

"Be quiet," John Lee Hooker says softly.

in time with your buddy's. Lots of red light. Sweat. Chewing gum.
CISCO: Moustache wax
EGBERT: Extreme facial gestures involving muscles you don't even use when you're shaving. Girls rushing the stage and into the arms of waiting martial-artist security men

CISCO: Girls in evening dresses and cocktail dresses . . .

EGBERT: Cock rings . . .

CISCO: See through dresses . . .

EGBERT: Mirrored shades reflecting 10,000 teenage psychos.

CISCO: And an audience that never stops cheering. All because you're the Scorpions.

EGBERT: There was a lot of information in that video, Gene

CISCO: Next we have the Hoodoo Gurus in "Wipeout."

EGBERT: I'd say that title just about describes this video, Gene.

CISCO: Next we have "Stevie Wonder Go Home."

EGBERT: You have to be careful how you say that title. It's Stevie Wonder's "Go Home." This is a very complex video. There's a lot of plot. It's pretty confusing. It features an attractive white suburban housewife type who seems to have engaged a black private eye to find her missing white suburban husband type

CISCO: While they are being followed by Crockett and Tubbs

The wife is spying on this espionage transaction while wearing spike heels on a marble floor. If she were a real CIA agent, she'd be wearing Reeboks.

EGBERT: Two guys who closely resemble Crockett and Tubbs in the closet department. Meanwhile Stevie himself is singing on the corner of Hollywood and Vine in a black leather trench coat and the same kind of sunglasses Yoko Ono wears. There also seems to be a bad guy, but he's really the husband, so maybe he's good. He gets into a cool Alfa Romeo. It's nice to see an Alfa in a video after all those Porsches.

CISCO: It's funny that the two stooges look like *Miami Vice*, because the leading lady in this video looks like Patti d'Arbanville, Don Johnson's real life leading lady

EGBERT: This looks just like L.A. and these guys are wearing summer sportswear, but Stevie is wearing a leather coat,

and even though he looks like he's on Hollywood and Vine there's steam coming out of his mouth.

CISCO: That's smog. When the black detective finds the girl's husband, she runs up to him and kisses him just the way Patti d'Arbanville must have kissed Don Johnson in the Chinese restaurant where they met for the first time.

EGBERT: The hubby is into some secret dealings here. He's selling some microfilm to the Godfather, who looks an awful lot like the chairman of Sony. The wife is spying on this top-level industrial espionage transaction even though she's wearing spike heels on a marble floor. If she were a real CIA agent, she'd be wearing Reebok sneakers

CISCO: Let's not give away the ending of this suspenseful video, Rog.

EGBERT: You're right, Gene. I must say I never had any idea that that song was about missing persons and industrial espionage until I saw the video. It does add another dimension

CISCO: Next we have Pete Townshend doing "Face the Face." He's wearing a gold lamé jacket, a cheap imitation of the Nudie one that Elvis wore

EGBERT: This is the new, mature Pete. Basically he's traded in the Who for a Basie-type big band. It's an interesting transition. Pete now looks like Peter Cushing, the great English horror movie star. I think this video brings up an interesting question. Pete broke up the Who. He got a 9-to-5 job as a book editor.

Maybe he thought Roger Daltrey looked silly and he's trying for a more mature thing with a big band. Do you think this is something we'll be seeing more and more of: aging superstars of the '60s trading in their rock bands for jazzy orchestras? People like Mick . . .

CISCO: Not Mick

EGBERT: Robert Plant?

CISCO: Robert Plant is already almost at that stage with the Honeydrippers.

EGBERT: This song is that rock 'n' roll misconception of big band jazz that we've seen before. I suspect that Pete employs a body double in this video, because every time we see him making some great moves it's from a considerable distance. What Pete is really trying hard to do here is to emulate Cab Calloway. Pete's baton work is a dead giveaway. He's trying to be Calloway. He's got a long way to go. CISCO: Next we have Roger Daltrey's "Let Me Down Easy"

EGBERT: Gene, I'm going to the bathroom. I'll be right back

Pause

CISCO: Well, Roger still hasn't come back from the bathroom, so I guess that's all for this month. We'll see you again At the Videos

Gene Cisco and Roger Egbert guarded Scott Cohen and Glenn O'Brien in a Harvard vs. Merchant Marine basketball game in 1961

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Rock Memories



A trip down Memory Lane with rock's first critic and David Johansen, Lou Reed, the ghost of Jim Morrison, and a flock of publicists.

Article by Richard Meltzer

Well for starters, I invented this shit. Rock writing. I was first. Well maybe not *literal* first, just one of the first two-three-four, probably the first to take the ball and actually *run* with the fucker; certainly the sole ear y manjack you're still reading now. Before Lester Bangs was, I am (and he's dead). Which, heck, I dangle as neither credit nor debt—just my way of saying hi.

Hi. I was always a fucking zealot. The silliest smartass to hold the banner high. This is among *writers* we're talking; the rock-rol flag of whatever

(Something to do with the night.) We'd all be at this party, for inst, for the fabuloozoolous Rolling Stones at some fussy French—or was it Italian?—New York eatery. After '72 at the Garden. OK, so there's this fountain *indoors*, this incredible fountain—so who's gonna JUMP in the thing? I look around, I don't see no candidates, Mick's asleep on the table. So it's gotta be me—got to, right? 'Cause if not, if the option's so clear and *nobody* does it, rock-roll as we um uh know it will um uh *perish*, y'know? . . . that sort of trip

So I jump and they give me the boot, a big security jerk on each arm. And it wasn't even only the *big* stuff I hadda flagwave at, like the Bitter End once "banned" me for throwing banana peels and I think chicken bones at Dr. Hook and his band. The remnants of some crummy, yuggy press food, while they were up there plodding through "Cover of *Rolling Stone*" at some Z-list press torture. Had I thought in advance I could have brought throwables of my own—dead animals in Jell-O, my (then) specialty—but you get the idea: I once really, truly gave a

shit; I cared religiously.

It even got to where—this religious biz—well I fucked three women who had lain with Jim. Morrison. The King of Rock a Roll. He was dead. They were in L.A. This is back when I was one big fool for moisture, 10 maybe 12 years ago, when I sought it constantly, so you'd hafta figure the law of averages would dictate an occasional insertion where Jim had trod. But three, well, and they all said, "Yeah, I fucked him," just like that. So there was no mistaking, and no mistaking my motives—yeah, I sought it. That specifically. One of 'em, my favorite as things worked out, was even the one who drove him to Paris to die. To his flight.

So, anyway, I'd tell people—I was always a big talker. I'd tell them I'd fucked three and they'd say, "Christ—that's like fucking him." Wrong! Or that I was trying to worm my wiener into lingering tide pools of his (possibly magical) demon seed—wrong again. No, really, bearing fully in mind that post-Beatles rock-roll godhead has really only computed, viably, as subject not object—as I rather than Thou—I would tell them (and mean it), "Naw—it's like being him!!"

But that's me. You probably wanna read about them. OK, you get what you pay for—will David Johansen do? 'Cause I've got this good one, the Mercury Xmas party of '72 or '73. Mercury Records. New York '73, that's it, by which time they were down to you'd have lunch with whoever the publicist was and all they had in the way of promo albs was Tom T. Hall and Johnny Rodriguez. Not much of a roster; Rod Stewart was long gone. Maybe also Uriah Heep. So anyway it's Xmas, Mercury's a joke and nobody comes, let's say 12 peop e, 15. I'm there, Nick Tosches is there, his wife, my girlfriend, and only because Warner Bros. didn't invite us to their posh fuckout a few choice avenues to the east. Twelve-fifteen exclusive of staff (like this huge, beefy mail-room gaga busting bottles and ripping down decor he'd originally been coerced to put up), and that includes not only the four of us but the only Mercury act to show—perchance to strut—those fabulous incredible New York Dolls. And their entourage of, at most, three.

Not much of an audience to strut at. But strut they do, and posture, preen, pout. This is, after all, their Big! Year!—they are not gonna waste it. An image fostered, an LP delivered, signed to a major, ready to burst out nationally, internationally—etc., etc., blah, blah, blah. The gaga, meantime, could care less. The publicist, the secretaries, me, Nick, our squeezes, we don't care. NOBODY CARES. If lesser execs had flown in from main-office Chicago they would (one surmises) not have cared either. A heavy dose of alienation—isn't that what these fine-fellows sing about? Isn't it precisely what they, hey-hey, stand for? Yeah, but in context, that context being, starhood per se. Frustrated, their "press" having deserted them for rosier freebies, their major turning minor by the second, their 18-month "stranglehold" on local illusion loosening limp in the ether, they reach for the volume knob, shrieking their affections a tad louder, and the Arthur Murray Book of Camp, cha-cha-ing 'em more deftly wall-to-wall.

Around and around they spin, but they never quite make it to the macaroni salad, a tight camera right to me and Nick, drunk. Not even half quite, actually, as starch would only wreak havoc with their belly lines, but also 'cause (obviously) we hate them and they hate us. Conspicuously. So you get this really amazing standoff: us the only writers, them the only band (hated between). Like a force field. "Imagine guys pretending to be fags!" says Nick at one point, which pointwise seems hardly the issue. Listen—you may not believe it but this was before choreographed, telegraphed insincerity was the name of the rock-roll game; before, in any event, it was compulsory. Certainly not among its more bona fide, certified quasi-underground adherents 'n' practitioners. Had there, I'm asking now, '86, been a

prior pack of so-called underfolk with as much negative existential ompah who had been so thinly, merely, shoddily "about" things rock, who had tendered such aboutness (known today as "genericness") as so lame a claim of, yes, innovation? I mean, what weren't they nonironically full of shit about? (The sex-role stuff being but the cheapest, easiest drop in the pot.)

So anyway, I'm standing by the macaroni salad, been there awhile, occasionally dipping my plastic fork into this big vat of the slop and up into my mouth, the communal vat which nobody's challenged for me for access to until suddenly . . . wait, I forgot to tell you how come I hate their guts. It's 'cause summer of '72 at the Hotel Diplomat they were stupid enough to pull this ersatz generic-communal "Hey, let's ail get down" number and then when this poor sucker named Gary Pallers, a Bronx teenager who hung with this pack that later amoebaed into the Dictators, who themselves went on to at least do the whole ersatz generic thing right (but that's a whole nuther etc.), anyway Gary took 'em literally, got up on stage to get down—and they beat the piss out of him.

So I'm at the macaroni, me and Nick but I'm the only one eating, when David Johansen blurts out,

Don't laugh, this is true, once upon a time rock writers were rock-rollers; there was no distinction.

"Hey don't eat it all—save some for me!" Oh? So I fling some elbows and mayo—this is basic mac salad, none of that "pasta" shtick as had yet to appear on earth—the 12 or so feet between us. Aim: good, true, but the range is off. Couple inches short, just missing Dollboy #1's spanking new red leather trousers, which lemme tell you are beauts. G-gorgeous. Really and truly, however, leathers are far from absorbent (having worn some myself so I know), would NOT have been stained by the foodstuff. But what does he know from absorbent?—so he throws a shit fit. A classic series of jagged, angular (perhaps) genuinely bemused oh-how-could-yous accompanied by invective, arm flails, and general harumphing on the part of his cohorts. A mere 12 feet, maybe even 11, and yet we stand firm, no threat apparent. As perfect a show of rock-roll sound/fury/harmless-from-the-gitgo as any Cyndi Lauper (for instance) would later, via video, bring to the mainstream foreground as product.

Finally, to make a long story at least almost over, we're all outside on the cold cement, us on the north side of 57th & 6th, Dolls on the south, throwing snowballs. Lots, many; at us. Again we stand firm, cheek-turning Christians like you wouldn't believe—or at least a pair of "toughies." Our dames, meanwhile, unhip to the true cheese of the "assault" (or dreading, by now, our role in so bum a charade), cuss us out and back their heels to a storefront. Minutes go by, lots, many. Fifteen? About 15. Fifteen minutes, a quarter fucking hour, and not one frozen dick hurled by these new-age beat boys had hit anything but trash cans, light poles, buses, or taxis. Not us—true—and we're not even dodging or ducking. Which can get mighty boring, even tough guys (drunk) get bored, we're bored and hoping these goblins, these turkeys, these jerks will ultimately pull no more weight than to make the world safe for Mötley Crüe, whose sole function of note during their collective professional tenure will be as Malcolm McLaren's first test barrel of monkeys. We're bored and hoping these peckers give up soon 'cause we ain't

quitting first. No way then a cop comes along and they scatter like hamsters in the night. And I go home, contemplate sleep, feel like I've just witnessed the planet's first step in Dying.

But don't laugh, this is true, once upon a time rock-writers were rock-rollers; there was no distinction. Well, distinction yeah like between high and low—I wasn't James Brown but neither was Pigpen—but not between them and us. Not per se, not so's you could notice in any concrete way they insisted on stressing, certainly not at the dawn of things, Summer of Love and thereabouts.

Heck, these guys welcomed us, or at rock-bottom least the novelty of our parallel mission, the mere fact (d g it) of a rock-generated Prose. Imagine, WRITING about rock! They dug it, really, so like first night at Monterey, Marty Bain says to me and Sandy Pearlman, *Crawdaddy* jerkjoes who have ventured West solely for IT, that universe-manifesting festival (Pop) which they fucked the film up of royalty, he says, "What, guys, you have no place to crash? Well by all means cop your z's on the carpeted floor of J. Airplane's motor lodge suite, availing yourselves of our righteous soft drinks and reefer, and please of course rap with us long into the AM re all things hip, hep, karmic, and cosmic," or equivalent coconspiratorial twaddle. Or like '68, after signing and partying with CBS—marinated octopus and mushroom caps—Big Brother & the Holding Company bass player Peter Asbin, a name lost in the ether so gosh but you're not as impressed as you should be, invites assorted *Crawdads* to catch newly released *The Graduate* with him—in lieu of MEMBERS of his v. own BAND. Hey, look, at the very very least we were never as totally, abjectly Outside o' stuff as the beats were to bop, the music they interloped, and once at a party J'i'm'i H'e'n*d'r'i*x actually came up, SHOCK MY HAND, and conspiratorially asked, "You were stoned when you wrote that [first U.S. Hendrix rant], right?"—which is more than Wardell Gray, let alone George Shearing, ever asked Kerouac.

Us/them as brothers in flesh, flash, & etc., pardon my wistful b.s. How long, tho (in any possible world), can such biz reasonably expect to endure? All it took in this case, y'know to lower the boom, was Something was ostensibly conspired at never for godsake Happening At All; this made all too clear ("Death of Rock" historians please note!) by the obvious fact, no later than early '69, of the whole incredible shebang—in its entirety!—having gone to Product like so much terminal meat. With megabuck dice at last rolling generally, not just for Beatles and Stones, "publicity" departments grew in size, stature, and malleasance at companies great and small, not so much to directly generate sales (the domain, more properly, of "promotion" and "marketing") as to placate the overpriced talent—look ma, my album reviewed!—and forcefeed fans a see-Spot-run of unfolding corporate b m. Necessitating us writefolk trash, if we want in at all, to abdicate our Responsibility, that of being rock 'n' roll, and accede too sweet to our first official "role," that of SHILLING for the bastards by keeping the urgency down, by (like nice li'l ladies & gents) re-viewing, pre-viewing, inter-viewing—in a word, writing about. Instead of from, from the fount of primal unity, from being the shit (in its purest form) 'stead of standing apart and (by accident) seeing it.

To stay in we hadda get Out.

That much was clear. Not that there weren't incentives—and who among us has not been a whore? Records . . . tickets . . . travel . . . 10 billion horrible parties. The everpopular look ma, me in print. In mags that by now were actually read. Some writers, and this always amazed me, even got off groupie-ing the merchandise, just sitting in a room while—oh boy!—running a tape as some geezer spoke. Me, I always hated interviews. I was willing to transcribe their words 'n' thoughts when they were willing to transcribe mine. They became such coddled



Sometime back when all of this really mattered: Jimi Hendrix at the Monterey Pop Festival, June 18, 1967.

schmucks, always trying to be serviced. Writers existed solely to write-about-them. Or even just, well, like I'm in the Island office, L.A., mid-'72, Jim Capaldi's there, ex-drummer of Traffic. We're introduced, he hears I write, and the first thing he says is, "Get me some tea." Get your own tea, fuckface! (And try writing your own reviews.)

So OK, no more shillyshally: I'm in the rest of these yarns. You couldn't get me out with a crowbar. Enough of this rockocentric, starocentric bullshit. (Unless it wants to write itself.) Time for two more, me in the center, or let's say I'm half, of each. Which means they're half—and could be writin'—but they won't. Tales of the cancer of starhood—it's a blight, it's a killer. Lou Reed, Patti Smith.

First Lou. Originally we met spring '67 at the Dom, this Warhol-operated dive on St. Marks where Nico was doing three sets a night (backed by the 17-year-old Jackson Browne), but the story starts later, '70, '71. At this Lisa Robinson thing, one of these enormous parties she used to throw, we're talking and I tell him hey—remember?—we've met before; we'd sat around, talked music, like I'd told him I really like "Black Angel's Death Song"; wow, he said, it's his favorite (first Velvets) cut, then he'd said, listen here's what's really great, his top two guitar licks of the moment, George Harrison just before the fake ending of "Strawberry Fields" and Roger McGinn's last 11 or so notes on the album version of "Why." None of which he remembers, Better, tho, not in current retrospect (tho plenty OK then) he says: "Wow, that's

nice"—prior contact, prior vibes—" 'cause y'know you're my favorite writer." Well, gee.

Which gets to be my role with him, with Lisa, with Lisa and him. I get an invite to another of her whatseems, as usual I go, I arrive, and turns out 's no party but an "intimate gathering"—me, Lisa and her husband Richard, Lou and his soon-to-be first wife, I think her name was Betty. I look around, I'm not sure what gives, so Lisa pulls me aside, informs me I'm Lou's entertainment. "You're his favorite writer, he respects you." Great. What really gives is Richard's itching to produce the guy, a feather in his wig hat considering all he's done is Hackamore Brick and the Flamin' Groovies. Lou meanwhile is contemplating a "comeback," he's cooling out, working as a bookkeeper or something, writing songs at his parents' house following a so-called breakdown, the one you can still hear in progress on *The Velvet Underground Live at Max's*. Exhaustion, collapse; the rock roll beast. Rightly he's wary, but thinks he could maybe return as a singer.

At an opportune moment Richard hands him an acoustic guitar. He plays, sings rudimentary versions of "Walk on the Wild Side" and that other one, whatever the title, with "they're taking her children away." Invited, I sing harmony. Lisa videotapes, presumably for posterity, and after songs, jokes. Lou goes first, this is still being taped, it is one you've prob'ly heard about two guys out on the town, they try and they try but they can't get laid. They're desperate, it's getting late and they'll settle for anything. I've heard this a thousand times and as he's working it down to the punch line—i.e., they spot a big fat janitor sweeping up, he's got huge nostrils, so they each poke in a prong and pump, they come

and the guy sez . . . —I've decided by then to spill the ending. Partly, I'm guessing now, to show I'm hip (Hey Lou, I know it too!), mainly tho 'cause everyone knows the fugger, even if usually the fatty's a woman, tho for bizness reasons (cultural insecurity?) Richard and Lisa are playing it dumb. "So the guy sez 'Do either of you boys have venereal disease?'" —a rather polite telling, usually it's the syph or the clap—"They say 'No' and the guy goes . . ."—and I INHALE DEEPLY, that's the ending, and Louis is pissed.

The Robinsons too, like maybe I've killed the golden goose but no, was just a faux past!—'s the Modern Age, and as Cole Porter said, anything goes—so he sings with Richard producing. I'm not forgiven, tho, when I review it, the one called simply *Lou Reed*, and I don't say exactly whatever the party line was supposed to be. Can't remember what it was I said, those were the days I did 15 reviews a week without even listening, I'd look at covers (if that much) and that was plenty, but I *did* listen to this one, listened and even liked it—but no party line so fuck me. At actual Lisa parties, those I'm still welcome at (having by now picked up a rep as "Rock's Bad Boy"), Lou meantime starts avoiding me, branding it an act of "hostility" every time I try and dialogue him as a nondeferential equal. Like I'd playfully suggest, "You and Betty sing Mamas and Papas harmonies on such and such," and he shoots back, "God you're hostile; you're telling me it isn't perfect as it is?" or "You writers are all the same" or "Whudda you know?—you're no musician."

Some writers, and this always amazed me, even got off groupie-ing the merchandise.

Time marches on, it's '73 or '74 and we ain't spoke for a while when this interview appears in *Zoo World*, Fort Lauderdale's very own, and now very defunct *Rolling Stone*, wherein Lou accuses me of (this is precious) PLAGIARISM. It seems I've done some lyrics for Blue Oyster Cult, a couple LPs were out by then, maybe three songs're mine, and it seems to him I couldn't've writt diddlelyot—not a wonderful rock 'n' ROLL lyric!—without having sat at his feet, basked in his omni-poetic brilliance. Dunno, I've looked thru the Reed Omnibook (both then and now) and all I can imagine having possibly stole from the paranoid lunatic is the word "autograph" from the Velvets' "New Age"; "Can I have your autograph?" he said to the fat blonde actress. In the Cult's "Stairway to the Stars" there's this line: "You can have my autograph"—so I guess I must've also stole his "can" and his "have." Shame on me!

Things between us continue to deteriorate (Lester Bangs, for inst, told me about this '75 Detroit show where Lou tells him, "Meltzer is number one, you Lester are number two, Pearlman is number three—I hate all your guts") 'til finally it's Thanksgiving '76, I'm living in L.A. and Lou's in town on a gig. Just to make contact—hey, it's been a while (and maybe I miss his lunacy)—I tell Arista OK I'll do an interview Thanksgiving night. So I'm eating my turkey, my stuffing, my cran- . . . r-r-ring goes the phone and it's Arista. Some publicist, Lou's canceled, he wants *nothing to do with me*. Fine, fine, he wants a bear grudge, I can bear 'em too. I will not listen to groove zero by this asshole again (and I ain't).

Tho maybe you've gathered I don't listen anyway. To rock-roll anything anymore. (Basically I don't.)

Okay, Patti Smith. No room left. Hate to hafta pull an Arabian Nights, but she'll hafta wait 'til next time. See ya!

(And you can call me Gramps.)

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JANUARY 1986 Debbie Harry, Mötley Crüe, Boris Becker, Punk's Tenth Anniversary, Frank Zappa, Yéles Noirs, Mojo Nixon, Ginger Baker, Aimee Mann, CBGB's, Tipper Gore's Diary, Jean-Luc Godard.

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50 *years* OF SPIN

Article by Glenn O'Brien

We don't usually think about the past up at SPIN. The future is coming up so fast that it's hard just to open all the press releases. But when anniversaries roll around, it's hard not to remember the old days of SPIN.

I was just a kid in the early days, hanging around with the old guys that ran the place: Mort, Ed, Bob's Uncle Paulie.

Before Bob took over, SPIN was run by its founder, Morty Spin, out of a small office in the Brill Building on Broadway. The SPIN office was right next to Don Kirshner's office. That was before his big-time TV rock concerts, but Kirshner was big in publishing, and he had many of the top songwriters working in his office. Morty always liked Barry Manilow and would speak to him when he ran into him in the hall, but Morty thought Barry was Kirshner's mailroom boy, not one of the songwriters. He refused to believe Barry was famous years later. If you see Barry, ask him about it. Say, "Got any mail for Morty Spin?"

Lots of famous people, including Neil Diamond and Harry Chapin, walked into the SPIN office by accident. You know that famous cover shot of Carole King holding up what was supposedly the ham sandwich that killed Mama Cass? That wasn't the real sandwich. That was Morty's lunch. And it wasn't ham, it was corned beef. You can tell if you look closely at the cover.

This is a tough business to be an editor in. Somebody's always got a hot new act they want you to know about. I remember one day one of our stringers was begging me to let him write up an up-and-coming singer-songwriter. I remember saying to him, "Biff, let me tell you something. I don't care how good this guy is. Nobody is ever going to make it in show business with a name like Billy Joel."

I don't remember Bing Crosby or any of that stuff, although Harold Conrad might. I remember meeting Glenn Miller at the office when I was helping out, emptying wastebaskets.

I remember Executive Editor Ed Rasen fighting in the Spanish Civil War. He was on the wrong side and was said to have shot at Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos.

Rasen made a name for himself in

globe-hopping music journalism during the '50s and '60s when he filed reports on the lounge-bar music, go-go music, and vaudeville and burlesque scenes in such spots as Mozambique, Angola, Lebanon, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Carson City, Johannesburg, Havana, Istanbul, Tehran, and Montevideo. Now Rasen works when he feels like it. During his career in journalism he amassed a fortune—today he owns most of the jukeboxes in Central America.

Rasen wrote stories on Prince Sihanouk's jazz band, the Shah's plans for a Studio 54 chain throughout the Middle East, the music of the tribe that ate Michael Rockefeller, and Idi Amin: accordionist, and he was nominated for the Pulitzer prize for his jungle interview with Che Guevara talking extensively about Jimi Hendrix, the Grateful Dead, and the Jefferson Airplane.

The May 1939 issue was memorable



for its cover-story exposé of Mussolini's collection of Carmen Miranda records, films, and costumes and rumors of secret letters and meetings. That was the first of many memorable stories by young Ed Kiersh.

The October 1941 issue is remembered for Bart Bull's blistering tirade "Woody Guthrie: Sincere or Insincere, That Is the Question." The same issue featured high-school student Scott Cohen's delightful recipe-studded interview with Leadbelly.

When the war came, SPIN was there. I worked as copyboy after school. The Andrews Sisters cover was found taped up in many a GI's and sailor's locker, right next to the famous shot of Betty Grable.

In 1944 Ed Rasen was awarded the Purple Heart while working on a story called "The Juke Joints of New Guinea."

The '50s were a good time at SPIN. Elvis was on the cover and inside there was Andrea 'Enthal's column on doo wop, and Donny the Folkie's column, and all the latest news on everybody from Jerry Lee Lewis to Sinatra. Gloria Steinem's blistering Sinatra exposé ran in the April 1959 issue.

Scott Cohen and I joined SPIN after getting out of the Merchant Marine. We had written a few pieces on Liberian R&B, the Beatles in Bremen, the Liverpool scene, and so on while we were still shipping out.

For me the real '60s began on a balmy afternoon in 1966 when I was covering the Newport Folk Festival and

Bob Dylan created a furor with his electric guitars. I remember Scott Cohen, then junior editor, throwing a can of root beer at the editor of *Folkways Magazine* and yelling "rock 'n' roll."

It's hard to believe that almost 20 years have passed since Ed Kiersh's riveting August 1966 story, "The Living Death of Dean Martin."

I remember how we felt when Bob took over the magazine in 1968. We all thought, "Who is this kid?" To most of us he was just a kid who had played drums for the Dave Clark Five a few years back. Who could imagine that he would know anything about the magazine business?

But we soon faced the facts. He knew what he was doing. During the year before Bob arrived, our cover stories were about people like Pat Boone, Annette Funicello, and the Singing Nun. The day Bob arrived we had our Wayne Newton cover already pasted up, ready to be shipped to the printer. Bob whipped out a magic marker and drew a heavy moustache on Newton. What could we do? He was the new boss. We sent it out that way. And that issue broke records for us. It sold so well that six months later Wayne Newton had exactly the same moustache. Bob designed Wayne Newton's moustache. But that's typical of his customary refusal to take credit for much of his work.

Bob wrote many SPIN cover stories himself under a pseudonym, including some of the bombshells, like "Helen Reddy: I Am Woman. But Was She Always?"

Before becoming SPIN's photo editor, George DuBose was art director of

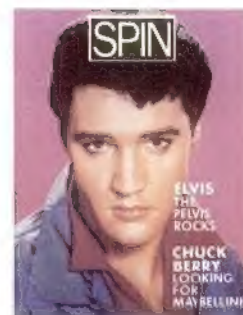


Custom Tractor. George is also a photographer. His work has been seen on driver's licenses and passports throughout the world.

Before Catherine Hazard came aboard as SPIN's art director she was captain of the bowling team at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Before he worked at SPIN, Managing Editor Betsy Brevitz was known to her co-workers as Sister Mary Fritz. While a nun she won several karate championships.

Before he became SPIN copy chief, Peter Carbonara had a long career in headline writing for daily newspapers. He wrote the headline that President



Truman holds in the famous photograph: "Dewey Wins in Landslide."

Felice Arden, the associate publisher, was Miss Market Research of 1971 and holds a degree in mining from Texas A & M, where she captained the water polo team. Before coming to SPIN she headed up a midget auto-racing team sponsored by a major blue jeans manufacturer.

Rudy Langlais, the special projects editor, has been with SPIN since 1939, when SPIN purchased his publication, the *Mojo Quarterly Review*. Rudy is the author of *Cooking With Cool*, a cookbook based on recipes from jazz musicians.

Sue Cummings came to SPIN on a work-release program. She holds degrees from Johns Hopkins University and Tulane.

Gene Cisco and Roger Egbert began writing for SPIN in 1976 while they were still members of the U.S. Olympic Luge Team.

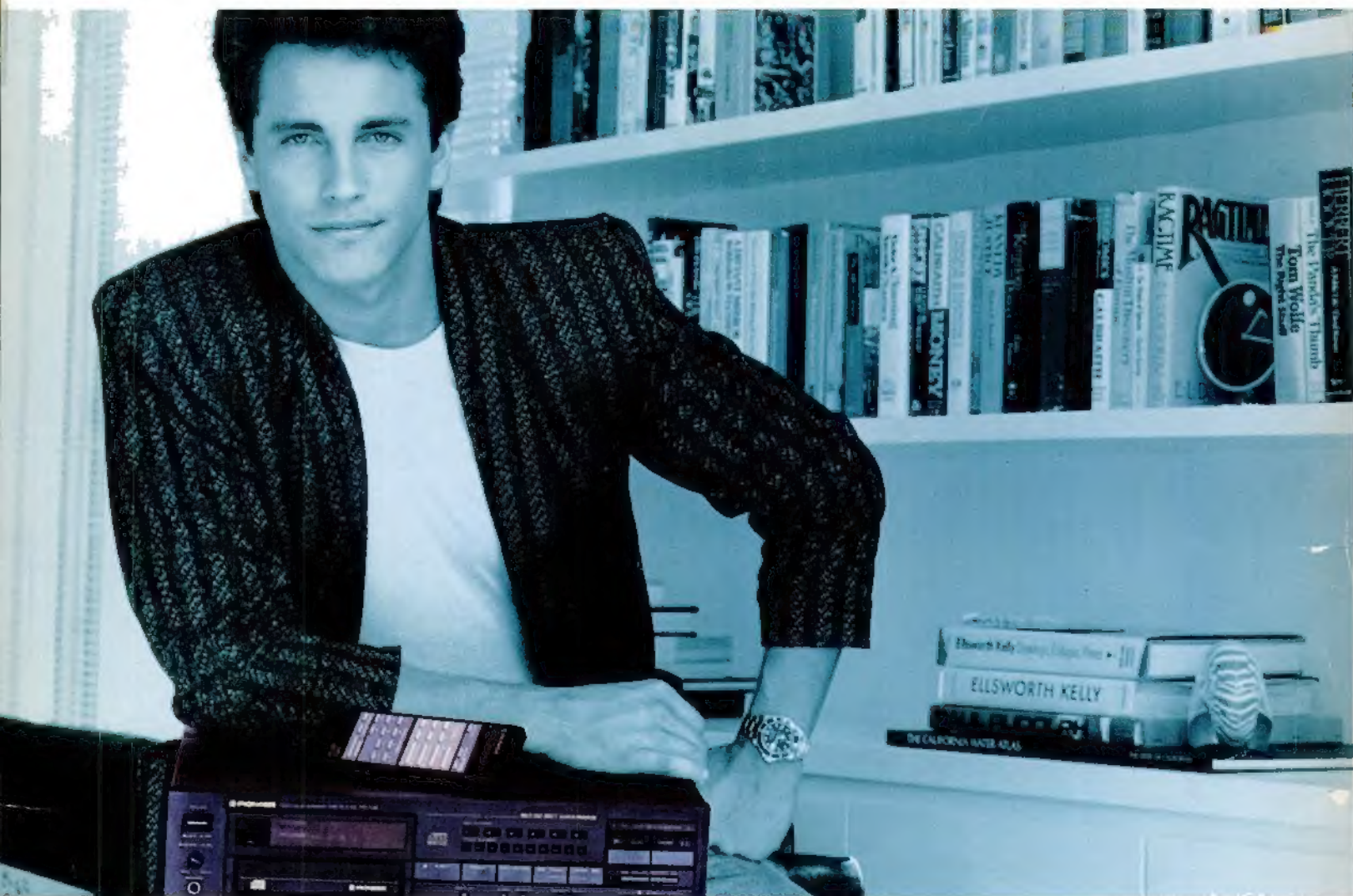
James Truman came to SPIN in 1980 after leaving the group Genesis.

Richard Gehr won his job at SPIN in a national contest sponsored by Bic Pens. His essay, "I Want to Work at SPIN," beat 45,000 others. Richard is the author of *Glenn Gould: An Unauthorized Biography* (K-Tel) and *Sidewalk Surfin': A History of Skateboard Music* (MIT Press).

Fifty years! God, time flies when you're having fun. It seems like only yesterday when I was back in the office in New York. For years I've been bugging Bob about how the magazine was too New York, too hip. I told him we should get out to the suburbs and the small towns and the farmlands and do a SPIN that reflected the America that Bruce Springsteen and John Cougar Mellencamp and Tom Petty and Bob Dylan and John Fogerty and Mötley Crüe are writing about. America doesn't stop at the Hudson, I told Bob.

And, man that he is, Bob listened, and he made me the tri-state area editor. Bob is still back in New York with the rest of the gang, but here at the SPIN field office at the mall in Middletown, things are hopping. We've got a double-dutch team in here, a skateboard crew that uses flaming hoops, and several hardcore bands. Gene Cisco and Roger Egbert are playing gin rummy and watching the NCAA basketball tournament on TV. There's a carnival out in the parking lot and the smallest man in the world was in here a few minutes ago. You should have heard him sing "Born in the U.S.A."

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